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[The Suburban Sage
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THE STORIES OF H. C. BUNNER

"SHORT SIXES"

THE SUBURBAN SAGE

BY H. C. BUNNER

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A PECULIAR GRITTING NOISE MADE HER LOOK DOWN

THE STORIES
OF
H. C. BUNNER

“SHORT SIXES”

STORIES TO BE READ WHILE
THE CANDLE BURNS

THE SUBURBAN SAGE

STRAY NOTES AND COMMENTS
ON HIS SIMPLE LIFE

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS

1919

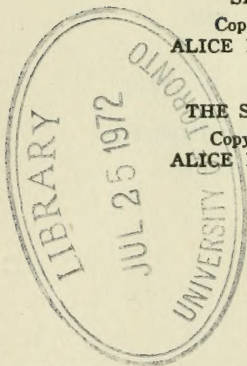
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THE SUBURBAN SAGE

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To
A. L. B.

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“SHORT SIXES”

**STORIES TO BE READ WHILE
THE CANDLE BURNS**

THE TENOR

IT was a dim, quiet room in an old-fashioned New York house, with windows opening upon a garden that was trim and attractive, even in its Winter dress—for the rose-bushes were all bundled up in straw ulsters. The room was ample, yet it had a cosy air. Its dark hangings suggested comfort and luxury, with no hint of gloom. A hundred pretty trifles told that it was a young girl's room: in the deep alcove nestled her dainty white bed, draped with creamy lace and ribbons.

"I was *so* afraid that I'd be late!"

The door opened, and two pretty girls came in, one in hat and furs, the other in a modest house-dress. The girl in the furs, who had been afraid that she would be late, was fair, with a bright color in her cheeks, and an eager, intent look in her clear brown eyes. The other girl was dark-eyed and dark-haired, dreamy, with a soft, warm, dusky color in her face. They were two very pretty girls indeed—or, rather, two girls about to be very pretty, for neither one was eighteen years old. The dark girl glanced at a little porcelain clock.

"You are in time, dear," she said, and helped her companion to take off her wraps.

Then the two girls crossed the room, and with a caressing and almost a reverent touch, the dark girl opened the doors of a little carven cabinet that hung upon the wall, above a small table covered with a delicate white cloth. In its depths, framed in a mat of odorous double violets, stood the photograph of the face of a handsome man of forty—a face crowned with clustering black locks, from beneath which a pair of large, mournful eyes looked out with something like religious fervor in their rapt gaze. It was the face of a foreigner.

“O Esther!” cried the other girl, “how beautifully you have dressed him to-day!”

“I wanted to get more,” Esther said; “but I’ve spent almost all my allowance—and violets do cost so shockingly. Come, now—” with another glance at the clock—“don’t let’s lose any more time, Louise dear.”

She brought a couple of tiny candles in Sèvres candlesticks, and two little silver saucers, in which she lit fragrant pastilles. As the pale gray smoke arose, floating in faint wreaths and spirals before the enshrined photograph, Louise sat down and gazed intently upon the little altar. Esther went to her piano and watched the clock. It struck two. Her hands fell softly on the keys, and, studying a printed programme in front of her, she began to play an overture. After the overture she played one or two pieces of the regular concert stock. Then she paused.

“I can’t play the Tschaikowski piece.”

"Never mind," said the other. "Let us wait for him in silence."

The hands of the clock pointed to 2:29. Each girl drew a quick breath, and then the one at the piano began to sing softly, almost inaudibly, "les Rameaux" in a transcription for tenor of Faure's great song. When it was ended, she played and sang the *encore*. Then, with her fingers touching the keys so softly that they awakened only an echo-like sound, she ran over the numbers that intervened between the first tenor solo and the second. Then she sang again, as softly as before.

The fair-haired girl sat by the little table, gazing intently on the picture. Her great eyes seemed to devour it, and yet there was something absent-minded, speculative, in her steady look. She did not speak until Esther played the last number on the programme.

"He had three encores for that last Saturday," she said, and Esther played the three encores.

Then they closed the piano and the little cabinet, and exchanged an innocent girlish kiss, and Louise went out, and found her father's coupé waiting for her, and was driven away to her great, gloomy, brown-stone home near Central Park.

Louise Laura Latimer and Esther Van Guilder were the only children of two families which, though they were possessed of the three "Rs" which are all and more than are needed to insure

admission to New York society—Riches, Respectability and Religion—yet were not in Society; or, at least, in the society that calls itself Society. This was not because Society was not willing to have them. It was because they thought the world too worldly. Perhaps this was one reason—although the social horizon of the two families had expanded somewhat as the girls grew up—why Louise and Esther, who had been playmates from their nursery days, and had grown up to be two uncommonly sentimental, fanciful, enthusiastically morbid girls, were to be found spending a bright Winter afternoon holding a ceremonial service of worship before the photograph of a fashionable French tenor.

It happened to be a French tenor whom they were worshipping. It might as well have been anybody or anything else. They were both at that period of girlish growth when the young female bosom is torn by a hysterical craving to worship something—any thing. They had been studying music, and they had selected the tenor who was the sensation of the hour in New York for their idol. They had heard him only on the concert stage; they were never likely to see him nearer. But it was a mere matter of chance that the idol was not a Boston Transcendentalist, a Popular Preacher, a Faith-Cure Healer, or a ringleted old maid with advanced ideas of Woman's Mission. The ceremonies might have been different in form: the worship would have been the same.

M. Hyppolite Rémy was certainly the musical hero of the hour. When his advance notices first appeared, the New York critics, who are a singularly unconfiding, incredulous lot, were inclined to discount his European reputation.

When they learned that M. Rémy was not only a great artist, but a man whose character was "wholly free from that deplorable laxity which is so often a blot on the proud escutcheon of his noble profession;" that he had married an American lady; that he had "embraced the Protestant religion"—no sect was specified, possibly to avoid jealousy—and that his health was delicate, they were moved to suspect that he might have to ask that allowances be made for his singing. But when he arrived, his triumph was complete. He was as handsome as his pictures, if he *was* a trifle short, a shade too stout.

He was a singer of genius, too; with a splendid voice and a sound method—on the whole. It was before the days of the Wagner autocracy, and perhaps his tremolo passed unchallenged as it could not now; but he was a great artist. He knew his business as well as his advance-agent knew his. The Rémy Concerts were a splendid success. Reserved seats, \$5. For the Series of Six, \$25.

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On the following Monday, Esther Van Guilder returned her friend's call, in response to an urgent invitation, despatched by mail. Louise Latimer's great bare room was incapable of trans-

mutation into a cosy nest of a boudoir. There was too much of its heavy raw silk furniture—too much of its vast, sarcophagus-like bed—too much of its upholsterer's elegance, regardless of cost—and taste. An enlargement from an ambrotype of the original Latimer, as he arrived in New York from New Hampshire, and a photograph of a "child subject" by Millais, were all her works of art. It was not to be doubted that they had climbed upstairs from a front parlor of an earlier stage of social development. The farm-house was six generations behind Esther; two behind Louise.

Esther found her friend in a state of almost feverish excitement. Her eyes shone; the color burned high on her clear cheeks.

"You never would guess what I've done, dear!" she began, as soon as they were alone in the big room. "I'm going to see *him*—to speak to him—*Esther!*" Her voice was solemnly hushed, "to *serve* him!"

"Oh, Louise! what *do* you mean?"

"To serve him—with my own hands! To—to—help him on with his coat—I don't know—to do something that a servant does—any thing, so that I can say that once, once only, just for an hour, I have been near him, been of use to him, served him in one little thing, as loyally as he serves OUR ART."

Music was THEIR art, and no capitals could tell how much it was theirs or how much of an art it was.

"Louise," demanded Esther, with a frightened look, "are you crazy?"

"No. Read this!" She handed the other girl a clipping from the advertising columns of a newspaper.

CHAMBERMAID AND WAITRESS.—WANTED, A NEAT and willing girl, for light work. Apply to Mme. Rémy, The Midlothian, Broadway

"I saw it just by accident, Saturday, after I left you. Papa had left his paper in the coupé. I was going up to my First Aid to the Injured Class—it's at four o'clock now, you know. I made up my mind right off—it came to me like an inspiration. I just waited until it came to the place where they showed how to tie up the arteries, and then I slipped out. Lots of the girls slip out in the horrid parts, you know. And then, instead of waiting in the ante-room, I put on my wrap, and pulled the hood over my head and ran off to the Midlothian—it's just around the corner, you know. And I saw his wife."

"What was she like?" queried Esther, eagerly.

"Oh, I don't know. Sort of horrid—actressy. She had a pink silk wrapper with swansdown all over it—at four o'clock, think! I was *awfully* frightened when I got there; but it wasn't the least trouble. She hardly looked at me, and she engaged me right off. She just asked me if I was willing to do a whole lot of things—I forget what they were—and where I'd worked before. I said at Mrs. Barcalow's."

" 'Mrs. Barcalow's?' "

"Why, yes—my Aunt Amanda, don't you know

—up in Framingham. I always have to wash the teacups when I go there. Auntie says that everybody has got to do *something* in *her* house.”

“Oh, Louise!” cried her friend, in shocked admiration; “how can you think of such things?”

“Well, I did. And she—his wife, you know—just said: ‘Oh, I suppose you’ll do as well as any one—all you girls are alike.’”

“But did she really take you for a—*servant*?”

“Why, yes, indeed. It was raining. I had that old ulster on, you know. I’m to go at twelve o’clock next Saturday.”

“But, Louise!” cried Esther, aghast, “you don’t truly mean to go!”

“I do!” cried Louise, beaming triumphantly.

“Oh, Louise!”

“Now, listen, dear,” said Miss Latimer, with the decision of an enthusiastic young lady with New England blood in her veins. “Don’t say a word till I tell you what my plan is. I’ve thought it all out, and you’ve got to help me.”

Esther shuddered.

“You foolish child!” cried Louise. Her eyes were sparkling: she was in a state of ecstatic excitement; she could see no obstacles to the carrying out of her plan. “You don’t think I mean to *stay* there, do you? I’m just going at twelve o’clock, and at four he comes back from the *matinée*, and at five o’clock I’m going to slip on my things and run downstairs, and have you waiting for me in the *coupé*, and off we go. Now do you see?”

It took some time to bring Esther's less venturesome spirit up to the point of assisting in this bold undertaking; but she began, after a while, to feel the delights of vicarious enterprise, and in the end the two girls, their cheeks flushed, their eyes shining feverishly, their voices tremulous with childish eagerness, resolved themselves into a committee of ways and means; for they were two well-guarded young women, and to engineer five hours of liberty was difficult to the verge of impossibility. However, there is a financial manœuvre known as "kiting checks," whereby A exchanges a check with B and B swaps with A again, playing an imaginary balance against Time and the Clearing House; and by a similar scheme, which an acute student of social ethics has called "kiting calls," the girls found that they could make Saturday afternoon their own, without one glance from the watchful eyes of Esther's mother or Louise's aunt—Louise had only an aunt to reckon with.

"And, oh, Esther!" cried the bolder of the conspirators, "I've thought of a trunk—of course I've got to have a trunk, or she would ask me where it was, and I couldn't tell her a fib. Don't you remember the French maid who died three days after she came here? Her trunk is up in the store-room still, and I don't believe anybody will ever come for it—it's been there seven years now. Let's go up and look at it."

The girls romped upstairs to the great unused upper story, where heaps of household rubbish

obscured the dusty half-windows. In a corner, behind Louise's baby chair and an unfashionable hat-rack of the old steering-wheel pattern, they found the little brown-painted tin trunk, corded up with clothes-line.

"Louise!" said Esther, hastily, "what did you tell her your name was?"

"I just said 'Louise'."

Esther pointed to the name painted on the trunk,

LOUISE LÉVY

"It is the hand of Providence," she said. "Somehow, now, I'm *sure* you're quite right to go."

And neither of these conscientious young ladies reflected for one minute on the discomfort which might be occasioned to Madame Rémy by the defection of her new servant a half-hour before dinner-time on Saturday night.

"Oh, child, it's you, is it?" was Mme. Rémy's greeting at twelve o'clock on Saturday. "Well, you're punctual—and you look clean. Now, are you going to break my dishes or are you going to steal my rings? Well, we'll find out soon enough. Your trunk's up in your room. Go up to the servants' quarters—right at the top of those stairs there. Ask for the room that belongs to apartment 11. You are to room with their girl."

Louise was glad of a moment's respite. She

had taken the plunge; she was determined to go through to the end. But her heart *would* beat and her hands *would* tremble. She climbed up six flights of winding stairs, and found herself weak and dizzy when she reached the top and gazed around her. She was in a great half-story room, eighty feet square. The most of it was filled with heaps of old furniture and bedding, rolls of carpet, of canvas, of oilcloth, and odds and ends of discarded or unused household gear—the dust thick over all. A little space had been left around three sides, to give access to three rows of cell-like rooms, in each of which the ceiling sloped from the very door to a tiny window at the level of the floor. In each room was a bed, a bureau that served for wash-stand, a small looking-glass, and one or two trunks. Women's dresses hung on the whitewashed walls. She found No. 11, threw off, desperately, her hat and jacket, and sunk down on the little brown tin trunk, all trembling from head to foot.

"Hello," called a cheery voice. She looked up and saw a girl in a dirty calico dress.

"Just come?" inquired this person, with agreeable informality. She was a good-looking large girl, with red hair and bright cheeks. She leaned against the door-post and polished her fingernails with a little brush. Her hands were shapely.

"Ain't got onto the stair-climbing racket yet, eh? You'll get used to it. 'Louise Levy,'" she read the name on the trunk. "You don't look like a sheeny. Can't tell nothin' 'bout names,

can you? My name's Slattery. You'd think I was Irish, wouldn't you? Well, I'm straight Ne' York. I'd be dead before I was Irish. Born here. Ninth Ward an' next to an engine-house. How's that? There's white Jews, too. I worked for one, pickin' sealskins down in Prince Street. Most took the lungs out of me. But that wasn't why I shook the biz. It queered my hands—see? I'm going to be married in the Fall to a German gentleman. He ain't so Dutch when you know him, though. He's a grocer. Drivin' now; but he buys out the boss in the Fall. How's that? He's dead stuck on my hooks, an' I have to keep 'em lookin' good. I come here because the work was light. I don't have to work—only to be doin' somethin', see? Only got five halls and the lamps. You got a fam'ly job, I s'pose? I wouldn't have that. I don't mind the Sooprintendent; but I'd be dead before I'd be bossed by a woman, see? Say, what fam'ly did you say you was with?"

This stream of talk had acted like a nerve- tonic on Louise. She was able to answer:

"M—Mr. Rémy."

"Ramy?—oh, lord! Got the job with His Tonsils? Well, you won't keep it long. They're meaner'n three balls, see? Rent their room up here and chip in with eleven. Their girls don't never stay. Well, I got to step, or the Sooprintendent'll be borin' my ear. Well—so long!"

But Louise had fled down the stairs. "His Tonsils" rang in her ears. What blasphemy!

What sacrilege! She could scarcely pretend to listen to Mme. Rémy's first instructions.

The household *was* parsimonious. Louise washed the caterer's dishes—he made a reduction in his price. Thus she learned that a late breakfast took the place of luncheon. She began to feel what this meant. The beds had been made; but there was work enough. She helped Mme. Rémy to sponge a heap of faded finery—*her* dresses. If they had been *his* coats! Louise bent her hot face over the tawdry silks and satins, and clasped her parboiled little finger-tips over the wet sponge. At half-past three Mme. Rémy broke the silence.

“We must get ready for Musseer,” she said. An ecstatic joy filled Louise's being. The hour of her reward was at hand.

Getting ready for “Musseer” proved to be an appalling process. First they brewed what Mme. Rémy called a “tease Ann.” After the *tisane*, a host of strange foreign drugs and cosmetics were marshalled in order. Then water was set to heat on a gas-stove. Then a little table was neatly set.

“Musseer has his dinner at half-past four,” Madame explained. “I don't take mine till he's laid down and I've got him off to the concert. There, he's coming now. Sometimes he comes home pretty nervous. If he's nervous, don't you go and make a fuss, do you hear, child?”

The door opened, and Musseer entered, wrapped in a huge frogged overcoat. There was

no doubt that he was nervous. He cast his hat upon the floor, as if he were Jove dashing a thunderbolt. Fire flashed from his eyes. He advanced upon his wife and thrust a newspaper in her face—a little pinky sheet, a notorious blackmailing publication.

“Zees,” he cried, “is your work!”

“What is it, now, Hipleet?” demanded Mme. Rémy.

“Vot it ees!” shrieked the tenor. “It ees ze history of how zey have heest me at Nice! It ees all zair—how I have been heest—in zis sacré sheet—in zis hankairchif of infamy! And it ees you zat have told it to zat devil of a Rastignac—*traitresse!*”

“Now, Hipleet,” pleaded his wife, “if I can’t learn enough French to talk with you, how am I going to tell Rastignac about your being hissed?”

This reasoning silenced Mr. Rémy for an instant—an instant only.

“You *vood* have done it!” he cried, sticking out his chin and thrusting his face forward.

“Well, I didn’t,” said Madame, “and nobody reads that thing, anyway. Now, don’t you mind it, and let me get your things off, or you’ll be catching cold.”

Mr. Rémy yielded at last to the necessity of self-preservation, and permitted his wife to remove his frogged overcoat, and to unwind him from a system of silk wraps to which the Gordian knot was a slip-noose. This done, he sat down before the dressing-case, and Mme. Rémy, after

tying a bib around his neck, proceeded to dress his hair and put brillianine on his moustache. Her husband enlivened the operation by reading from the pinky paper.

“It ees not gen-air-al-lee known—zat zees dees-tin-guished tenor vos heest on se pob-lic staidj at Nice—in ze year—”

Louise leaned against the wall, sick, faint and frightened, with a strange sense of shame and degradation at her heart. At last the tenor’s eye fell on her.

“Anozzair eediot?” he inquired.

“She ain’t very bright, Hipleet,” replied his wife; “but I guess she’ll do. Louise, open the door—there’s the caterer.”

Louise placed the dishes upon the table mechanically. The tenor sat himself at the board, and tucked a napkin in his neck.

“And how did the Benediction Song go this afternoon?” inquired his wife.

“Ze Bénédiction? Ah! One *encore*. One on-lee. Zese pigs of Américains. I t’row my pairls biff’ swine. *Chops once more!* You vant to mordair me? Vat do zis mean, madame? You ar-r-r-re in lig wiz my enemies. All ze vorlt is against ze ar-r-r-teest!”

The storm that followed made the first seem a zephyr. The tenor exhausted his execratory vocabulary in French and English. At last, by way of a dramatic finale, he seized the plate of chops and flung it from him. He aimed at the wall; but Frenchmen do not pitch well. With a

ring and a crash, plate and chops went through the broad window-pane. In the moment of stricken speechlessness that followed, the sound of the final smash came softly up from the sidewalk.

“Ah-a-a-a-a-a-a-a-ah!”

The tenor rose to his feet with the howl of an anguished hyena.

“Oh, good gracious!” cried his wife; “he’s going to have one of his creezes—his creezes de nare!”

He did have a *crise de nerfs*. “Ten dollair!” he yelled, “for ten dollair of glass!” He tore his pomaded hair; he tore off his bib and his neck-tie, and for three minutes without cessation he shrieked wildly and unintelligibly. It was possible to make out, however, that “arteest” and “ten dollair” were the themes of his improvisation. Finally he sank exhausted into the chair, and his white-faced wife rushed to his side.

“Louise!” she cried, “get the foot-tub out of the closet while I spray his throat, or he can’t sing a note. Fill it up with warm water—102 degrees—there’s the thermometer—and bathe his feet.”

Trembling from head to foot, Louise obeyed her orders, and brought the foot-tub, full of steaming water. Then she knelt down and began to serve the maestro for the first time. She took off his shoes. Then she looked at his socks. Could she do it?

"Eediot!" gasped the sufferer, "make haste! I die!"

"Hold your mouth open, dear," said Madame, "I haven't half sprayed you."

"Ah! *you!*" cried the tenor. "Cat! Devil! It ees you zat have killed me!" And moved by an access of blind rage, he extended his arm, and thrust his wife violently from him.

Louise rose to her feet, with a hard, set, good old New England look on her face. She lifted the tub of water to the level of her breast, and then she inverted it on the tenor's head. For one instant she gazed at the deluge, and at the bathtub balanced on the maestro's skull like a helmet several sizes too large—then she fled like the wind.

Once in the servants' quarters, she snatched her hat and jacket. From below came mad yells of rage.

"I kill hare! give me my knife—give me my rivvovlare! Au secours! Assassin!"

Miss Slattery appeared in the doorway, still polishing her nails.

"What have you done to His Tonsils?" she inquired. "He's pretty hot, this trip."

"How can I get away from here?" cried Louise.

Miss Slattery pointed to a small door. Louise rushed down a long stairway—another—and yet others—through a great room where there was a smell of cooking and a noise of fires—past white-capped cooks and scullions—through a long stone

corridor, and out into the street. She cried aloud as she saw Esther's face at the window of the coupé.

She drove home—cured.

OWING TO THE
SUDDEN INDISPOSITION
OF
M. RÉMY
THERE WILL BE NO
CONCERT
THIS EVENING.
MONEY REFUNDED AT THE
BOX OFFICE.

COL. BRERETON'S AUNTY

THE pleasant smell of freshly turned garden-mould and of young growing things came in through the open window of the Justice of the Peace. His nasturtiums were spreading, pale and weedy—I could distinguish their strange, acrid scent from the odor of the rest of the young vegetation. The tips of the morning-glory vines, already up their strings to the height of a man's head, curled around the window-frame, and beckoned to me to come out and rejoice with them in the freshness of the mild June day. It was pleasant enough inside the Justice's front parlor, with its bright ingrain carpet, its gilt clock, and its marble-topped centre-table. But the Justice and the five gentlemen who were paying him a business call—although it was Sunday morning—looked, the whole half-dozen of them, ill in accord with the spirit of the Spring day. The Justice looked annoyed. The five assembled gentlemen looked stern.

"Well, as you say," remarked the fat little Justice, who was an Irishman, "if this divilment goes on—"

"It's not a question of going on, Mr. O'Brien," broke in Alfred Winthrop; "it has gone on too long."

Alfred is a little inclined to be arrogant with the unwinthropian world; and, moreover, he was rushing the season in a very grand suit of white flannels. He looked rather too much of a lord of creation for a democratic community. Antagonism lit the Justice's eye.

"I'm afraid we've got to do it, O'Brien," I interposed, hastily. The Justice and I are strong political allies. He was mollified.

"Well, well," he assented; "let's have him up and see what he's got to say for himself. Mike!" he shouted out the window; "bring up Colonel Brereton!"

Colonel Brereton had appeared in our village about a year before that Sunday. Why he came, whence he came, he never deigned to say. But he made no secret of the fact that he was an unreconstructed Southron. He had a little money when he arrived—enough to buy a tiny one-story house on the outskirts of the town. By vocation he was a lawyer, and, somehow or other, he managed to pick up enough to support him in his avocation, which, we soon found out, was that of village drunkard. In this capacity he was a glorious, picturesque and startling success. Saturated with cheap whiskey, he sat all day long in the barroom or on the porch of the village groggery, discoursing to the neighborhood loafers of the days befo' the wah, when he had a vast plantation in "Firginia"—"and five hundred niggehs, seh."

So long as the Colonel's excesses threatened

only his own liver, no one interfered with him. But on the night before we called upon the Justice, the Colonel, having brooded long over his wrongs at the hands of the Yankees, and having made himself a reservoir of cocktails, decided to enter his protest against the whole system of free colored labor by cutting the liver out of every negro in the town; and he had slightly lacerated Winthrop's mulatto coachman before a delegation of citizens fell upon him, and finding him unwilling to relinquish his plan, placed him for the night in the lock-up in Squire O'Brien's cellar.

We waited for the Colonel. From under our feet suddenly arose a sound of scuffling and smothered imprecations. A minute later, Mike, the herculean son of the Justice, appeared in the doorway, bearing a very small man hugged to his breast as a baby hugs a doll.

"Let me down, seh!" shouted the Colonel. Mike set him down, and he marched proudly into the room, and seated himself with dignity and firmness on the extreme edge of a chair.

The Colonel was very small indeed for a man of so much dignity. He could not have been more than five foot one or two; he was slender—but his figure was shapely and supple. He was unquestionably a handsome man, with fine, thin features and an aquiline profile—like a miniature Henry Clay. His hair was snow-white—prematurely, no doubt—and at the first glance you thought he was clean shaven. Then you

saw that there was scarcely a hair on his cheeks, and that only the finest imaginable line of snowy white moustaches curled down his upper lip. His skin was smooth as a baby's and of the color of old ivory. His teeth, which he was just then exhibiting in a sardonic smile, were white, small, even. But if he was small, his carriage was large, and military. There was something military, too, about his attire. He wore a high collar, a long blue frock coat, and tight, light gray trousers with straps. That is, the coat had once been blue, the trousers once light gray, but they were now of many tints and tones, and, at that exact moment, they had here and there certain peculiar high lights of whitewash.

The Colonel did not wait to be arraigned. Sweeping his black, piercing eye over our little group, he arraigned *us*.

"Well, *gentlemen*," with keen irony in his tone, "I reckon you think you've done a right smart thing, getting the Southern gentleman in a hole? A pro-dee-gious fine thing, I reckon, since it's kept you away from chu'ch. *Baptis'* church, I believe?" This was to poor Canfield, who was suspected of having been of that communion in his youth, and of being much ashamed of it after his marriage to an aristocratic Episcopalian. "Nice Sunday mo'ning to worry a Southern gentleman! Gentleman who's owned a plantation that you could stick this hyeh picayune town into one co'neh of! Owned mo' niggehs than you eveh saw. Robbed of his land and his

niggehs by you Yankee gentlemen. Drinks a little wine to make him fo'get what he's suffehed. Gets ovehtaken. Tries to avenge an insult to his honah. Put him in a felon's cell and whitewash his gyarments. And now you come hyeh—you come hyeh—" here his eye fell with deep disapproval upon Winthrop's white flannels—"you come hyeh in youh underclothes, and you want to have him held fo' Special Sessions."

"You are mistaken, Colonel Brereton," Winthrop interposed; "if we can have your promise—"

"I will promise you nothing, seh!" thundered the Colonel, who had a voice like a church-organ, whenever he chose to use it; "I will make no conventions with you! I will put no restrictions on my right to defend my honah. Put me in youh felon's cell. I will rot in youh infehnal dungeons; but I will make no conventions with you. You can put me in striped breeches, but you cya'n't put my honah in striped breeches!"

"That settles it," said the Justice.

"And all," continued the Colonel, oratorically, "and all this hyeh fuss and neglect of youh religious duties, fo' one of the cheapest and most o'nery niggehs I eveh laid eyes on. Why, I wouldn't have given one hundred dollahs fo' that niggeh befo' the wah. No, seh, I give you my wo'd, that niggeh ain't wo'th ninety dollahs!"

"Mike!" said the Justice, significantly. The Colonel arose promptly, to insure a voluntary exit. He bowed low to Winthrop.

"Allow me to hope, seh," he said, "that you won't catch cold." And with one lofty and comprehensive salute he marched haughtily back to his dungeon, followed by the towering Mike.

The Justice sighed. An elective judiciary has its trials, like the rest of us. It is hard to commit a voter of your own party for Special Sessions. However—"I'll drive him over to Court in the morning," said the little Justice.

.

I was sitting on my verandah that afternoon, reading. Hearing my name softly spoken, I looked up and saw the largest and oldest negress I had ever met. She was at least six feet tall, well-built but not fat, full black, with carefully dressed gray hair. I knew at once from her neat dress, her well-trained manner, the easy deference of the curtsy she dropped me, that she belonged to the class that used to be known as "house darkeys"—in contradistinction to the field hands.

"I understand, seh," she said, in a gentle, low voice, "that you gentlemen have got Cunnle Bre'eton jailed?"

She had evidently been brought up among educated Southerners, for her grammar was good and her pronunciation correct, according to Southern standards. Only once or twice did she drop into negro talk.

I assented.

"How much will it be, seh, to get him out?"

She produced a fat roll of twenty and fifty dollar bills. "I do fo' Cunnle Bre'eton," she explained: "I have always done fo' him. I was his Mammy when he was a baby."

I made her sit down—when she did there was modest deprecation in her attitude—and I tried to explain the situation to her.

"You may go surety for Colonel Brereton," I said; "but he is certain to repeat the offense."

"No, seh," she replied, in her quiet, firm tone; "the Cunnle won't make any trouble when I'm here to do fo' him."

"You were one of his slaves?"

"No, seh. Cunnle Bre'eton neveh had any slaves, seh. His father, Majah Bre'eton, he had slaves one time, I guess, but when the Cunnle was bo'n, he was playing kyards fo' a living, and he had only me. When the Cunnle's mother died, Majah Bre'eton he went to Mizzoura, and he put the baby in my ahms, and he said to me, 'Sabrine,' he sez, 'you do fo' him.' And I've done fo' him eveh since. Sometimes he gets away from me, and then he gets kind o' wild. He was in Sandusky a year, and in Chillicothe six months, and he was in Tiffin once, and one time in a place in the state of Massachusetts—I disremembek the name. This is the longest time he eveh got away from me. But I always find him, and then he's all right."

"But you have to deal with a violent man."

"The Cunnle won't be violent with me, seh."

"But you're getting old, Aunty—how old?"

"I kind o' lost count since I was seventy-one, seh. But I'm right spry, yet."

"Well, my good woman," I said, decisively, "I can't take the responsibility of letting the Colonel go at large unless you give me some better guarantee of your ability to restrain him. What means have you of keeping him in hand?"

She hesitated a long time, smoothing the folds of her neat alpaca skirt with her strong hands. Then she said:

"Well, seh, I wouldn't have you say anything about it, fo' feah of huhting Cunnle Bre'eton's feelings; but when he gets that way, I jes' nachully tuhn him up and spank him. I've done it eveh since he was a baby," she continued apologetically, "and it's the only way. But you won't say anything about it, seh? The Cunnle's powerful sensitive."

I wrote a brief note to the Justice. I do not know what legal formalities he dispensed with; but that afternoon the Colonel was free. Aunt Sabrine took him home, and he went to bed for two days while she washed his clothes. The next week he appeared in a complete new outfit—in cut and color the counterpart of its predecessor.

.

Here began a new era for the Colonel. He was no longer the town drunkard. Aunty Sabrine "allowanced" him—one cocktail in the "mo'n-ing"; a "ho'n" at noon, and one at night. On this diet he was a model of temperance. If occasionally he essayed a drinking bout, Aunty Sa-

brine came after him at eve, and led him home. From my window I sometimes saw the steady big figure and the wavering little one going home over the crest of the hill, equally black in their silhouettes against the sunset sky.

What happened to the Colonel we knew not. No man saw him for two days. Then he emerged with unruffled dignity. The two always maintained genuine Southern relations. He called her his damn black nigger—and would have killed any man who spoke ill of her. She treated him with the humble and deferential familiarity of a “mammy” toward “young mahse.”

For herself, Aunt Sabrine won the hearts of the town. She was an ideal washerwoman, an able temporary cook in domestic *interregna*, a tender and wise nurse, and a genius at jam and jellies. The Colonel, too, made money in his line, and put it faithfully into the common fund.

In March of the next year, I was one of a Reform Town Committee, elected to oust the usual local ring. We discharged the inefficient Town Counsel, who had neglected our interests in a lot of suits brought by swindling road-contractors. Aunt Sabrine came to me, and solemnly nominated Colonel Brereton for the post. “He is sho’ly a fine loyyeh,” she said.

I know not whether it was the Great American sense of humor, or the Great American sense of fairness, but we engaged the Colonel, conditionally.

He was a positive, a marvelous, an incredible

success, and he won every suit. Perhaps he did not know much law; but he was the man of men for country judges and juries. Nothing like his eloquence had ever before been heard in the county. He argued, he cajoled, he threatened, he pleaded, he thundered, he exploded, he confused, he blazed, he fairly dazzled—for silence stunned you when the Colonel ceased to speak, as the lightning blinds your eyes long after it has vanished.

The Colonel was utterly incapable of seeing any but his own side of the case. I remember a few of his remarks concerning Finnegan, the contractor, who was suing for \$31.27 payments withheld.

“Fohty yahds!” the Colonel roared: “fohty yahds! This hyeh man Finnegan, this hyeh cock-a-doodle-doo, he goes along this hyeh road, and he casts his eye oveh this hyeh excavation, and he comes hyeh and sweahs it’s fohty yahds good measure. Does he take a tape measure and measure it? NO! Does he even pace it off with those hyeh corkscrew legs of his that he’s trying to hide under his chaiah? NO!! He says, ‘I’m Finnegan, and this hyeh’s fohty yahds,’ and off he sashays up the hill, wondering wheah Finnegan’s going to bring up when he’s walked off the topmost peak of the snow-clad Himalayas of human omniscience! And this hyeh man, this hyeh insult to humanity in a papeh collah, he comes hyeh, to this august tribunal, and he asks you, gentlemen of the

jury, to let him rob you of the money you have earned in the sweat of your brows, to take the bread out of the mouths of the children whom your patient and devoted wives have borne to you in pain and anguish—but I say to you, *gentlemen*—(suddenly exploding) HIS PAPEH COLLAH SHALL ROAST IN HADES BEFO' I WILL BE A PAHTY TO THIS HYEH INFAMY!"

Finnegan was found in hiding in his cellar when his counsel came to tell him that he could not collect his \$31.27. "Bedad, is *that* all?" he gasped: "I t'ought I'd get six mont's."

People flocked from miles about to hear the Colonel. Recalcitrant jurymen were bribed to service by the promise of a Brereton case on the docket. His performances were regarded in the light of a free show, and a verdict in his favor was looked upon as a graceful gratuity.

He made money—and he gave it meekly to Aunty Sabine.

.

It was the night of the great blizzard; but there was no sign of cold or wind when I looked out, half-an-hour after midnight, before closing my front door. I heard the drip of water from the trees, I saw a faint mist rising from the melting snow. At the foot of my lawn I dimly saw the Colonel's familiar figure marching homeward from some political meeting preliminary to Tuesday's election. His form was erect, his step

steady. He swung his little cane and whistled as he walked. I was proud of the Colonel.

An hour later the storm was upon us. By noon of Monday, Alfred Winthrop's house, two hundred yards away, might as well have been two thousand, so far as getting to it, or even seeing it, was concerned. Tuesday morning the snow had stopped, and we looked out over a still and shining deluge with sparkling fringes above the blue hollows of its frozen waves. Across it roared an icy wind, bearing almost invisible diamond dust to fill irritated eyes and throats. The election was held that day. The result was to be expected. All the "hard" citizens were at the polls. Most of the reformers were stalled in railroad trains. The Reform Ticket failed of re-election, and Colonel Brereton's term of office was practically at an end.

I was outdoors most of the day, and that night, when I awoke about three o'clock, suddenly and with a shock, thinking I had heard Aunty Sabine's voice crying: "Cunnle! wheah are you, Cunnle?" my exhausted brain took it for the echo of a dream. I must have dozed for an hour before I sprang up with a certainty in my mind that I had heard her voice in very truth. Then I hurried on my clothes, and ran to Alfred Winthrop's. He looked incredulous; but he got into his boots like a man. We found Aunty Sabine, alive but unconscious, on the crest of the hill. When we had secured an asylum for her, we searched for the Colonel. The next day we

learned that he had heard the news of the election and had boarded a snow-clearing train that was returning to the Junction.

It was a week before Aunty Sabine recovered. When I asked her if she was going to look for the Colonel, she answered with gentle resignation:

“No, seh. I’m ’most too old. I’ll stay hyeh, wheah he knows wheah to find me. He’ll come afteh me, sho’.”

.

Sixteen months passed, and he did not come. Then, one evening, a Summer walk took me by the little house. I heard a voice I could not forget.

“Hyeh, you black niggeh, get along with that suppeh, or I come in theah and cut youh damn haid off!”

Looking up, I saw Colonel Brereton, a little the worse for wear, seated on the snake fence. No he was not seated; he was hitched on by the crook of his knees, his toes braced against the inside of the lower rail. His coat-tails hung in the vacant air.

He descended, a little stiffly, I thought, and greeted me cordially, with affable dignity. His manner somehow implied that it was *I* who had been away.

He insisted on my coming into his front yard and sitting down on the bench by the house, while he condescendingly and courteously inquired after the health of his old friends and

neighbors. I stayed until supper was announced. The Colonel was always the soul of hospitality; but on this occasion he did not ask me to join him. And I reflected, as I went away, that although he had punctiliously insisted on my sitting down, the Colonel had remained standing during our somewhat protracted conversation.

A ROUND-UP

I

WHEN Rhodora Boyd—Rhodora Pennington that was—died in her little house, with no one near her but one old maid who loved her, the best society of the little city of Trega Falls indulged in more or less complacent reminiscence.

Except to Miss Wimple, the old maid, Rhodora had been of no importance at all in Trega for ten long years, and yet she had once given Trega society the liveliest year it had ever known. (I should tell you that Trega people never mentioned the Falls in connection with Trega. Trega was too old to admit any indebtedness to the Falls.)

Rhodora Pennington came to Trega with her invalid mother as the guest of her uncle, the Commandant at the Fort—for Trega was a garrison town. She was a beautiful girl. I do not mean a pretty girl: there were pretty girls in Trega—several of them. She was beautiful as the Queen of Sheba was beautiful—grand, perfect, radiantly tawny of complexion, without a flaw or a failing in her pulchritude—almost too fine a being for family use, except that she had plenty of hot woman's blood in her veins, and

was an accomplished, delightful, impartial flirt.

All the men turned to her with such prompt unanimity that all the girls of Trega's best society joined hands in one grand battle for their prospective altars and hearths. From the June day when Rhodora came, to the Ash Wednesday of the next year when her engagement was announced, there was one grand battle, a dozen girls with wealth and social position and knowledge of the ground to help them, all pitted against one garrison girl, with not so much as a mother to back her—Mrs. Pennington being hopelessly and permanently on the sick-list.

Trega girls who had never thought of doing more than wait at their leisure for the local young men to marry them at *their* leisure now went in for accomplishments of every sort. They rode, they drove, they danced new dances, they read Browning and Herbert Spencer, they sang, they worked hard at archery and lawn-tennis, they rowed and sailed and fished, and some of the more desperate even went shooting in the Fall, and in the Winter played billiards and—penny ante. Thus did they, in the language of a somewhat cynical male observer, back Accomplishments against Beauty.

The Shakspeare Club and the Lake Picnic, which had hitherto divided the year between them, were submerged in the flood of social entertainments. Balls and parties followed one another. Trega's square stone houses were lit up night after night, and the broad moss-grown

gardens about them were made trim and presentable, and Chinese lanterns turned them into a fairy-land for young lovers.

It was a great year for Trega! The city had been dead, commercially, ever since the New York Central Railroad had opened up the great West; but the unprecedented flow of champagne and Apollinaris actually started a little business boom, based on the inferable wealth of Trega, and two or three of Trega's remaining firms went into bankruptcy because of the boom. And Rhodora Pennington did it all.

Have you ever seen the end of a sham-fight? You have been shouting and applauding, and wasting enough enthusiasm for a football match. And now it is all finished, and nothing has been done, and you go home somewhat ashamed of yourself, and glad only that the blue-coated participants must feel more ashamed of themselves; and the smell of the villainous saltpetre, that waked the Berserker in your heart an hour ago, is now noisome and disgusting, and makes you cough and sneeze.

Even so did the girls of Trega's best society look each in the face of the other, when Ash Wednesday ended that nine months of riot, and ask of each other, "What has it all been about?"

True, there were nine girls engaged to be married, and engagement meant marriage in Trega. Alma Lyle was engaged to Dexter Townsend, Mary Waite to John Lang, Winifred Peters to McCullom McIntosh, Ellen Humphreys to George

Lister, Laura Visscher to William Jans (Oranje boven!—Dutch blood stays Dutch), Millicent Smith to Milo Smith, her cousin, Olive Cregier to Aleck Sloan, Aloha Jones (niece of a Sandwich Islands missionary) to Parker Hall, and Rhodora Pennington to Charley Boyd.

But all of these matches, save the last, would have been made in the ordinary course of things. The predestination of propinquity would have settled that. And even if Ellen Humphreys had married John Lang instead of George Lister, and George Lister had wedded Mary Waite—why, there would have been no great difference to admire or to deplore. The only union of the nine which came as a surprise to the community was the engagement of Rhodora to Charley Boyd. The beauty of the season had picked up the one crooked stick in the town—a dissolute, ne'er-do-well hanger-on of Trega's best society, who would never have seen a dinner-card if he had not been a genius at amateur theatricals, an artist on the banjo, and a half-bred Adonis.

There the agony ended for the other girls, and there it began for Rhodora Boyd. In less than a year, Boyd had deserted her. The Commandant was transferred to the Pacific Coast. Rhodora moved, with her mother, bed-ridden now, into a little house in the unfashionable outskirts of Trega. There she nursed the mother until the poor bed-ridden old lady died. Rhodora supported them both by teaching music and French at the Trega Seminary, down by the

Falls. Morning and evening she went out and back on that weary, jingling horse-car line. She received the annual visits that her friends paid her, inspired by something between courtesy and charity, with her old stately simplicity and imperturbable calm; and no one of them could feel sure that she was conscious of their triumph or of her degradation. And she kept the best part of her stately beauty to the very last. In any other town she would have been taught what divorce-courts were made for; but Trega society was Episcopalian, and that communion is healthily and conservatively monogamous.

And so Rhodora Boyd, that once was Rhodora Pennington, died in her little house, and her pet old maid closed her eyes. And there was an end of Rhodora. Not quite an end, though.

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II

SCENE.—*The Public Library of Trega. MRS. GEORGE LISTER and MRS. JOHN LANG are seated in the Rotunda. MR. LIBRIVER, the Librarian, advances to them with books in his hands.*

MRS. LISTER.—Ah, here comes Mr. Libriver, with my “Intellectual Life.” Thank you, Mr. Libriver—you are always so kind!

MRS. LANG.—And Mr. Libriver has brought me my “Status of Woman.” Oh, thank you, Mr. Libriver.

MR. LIBRIVER, *a thin young man in a linen duster, retires, blushing.*

MRS. LISTER.—Mr. Libriver does so appreciate women who are free from the bondage of the novel. Did you hear about poor Rhodora’s funeral?

MRS. LANG (*with a sweeping grasp at the intellectual side of the conversation*).—Oh, I despise love-stories. In the church? Oh, yes, I heard. (*Sweetly.*) Dr. Homly told me. Doesn’t it seem just a little—ostentatious?

MRS. LISTER.—Ostentatious—but, do you know, my dear, there are to be eight pall-bearers!

MRS. LANG (*turning defeat into victory*).—No, I did *not* know. I don’t suppose that ridiculous old maid, that Miss Wimple, who seems to be conducting the affair, *dared* to tell *that* to Dr. Homly. And who are they?

MRS. LISTER (*with exceeding sweetness*).—Oh, I don't know, dear. Only I met Mr. Townsend, and he told me that Dr. Homly had just told *him* that he was one of the eight.

MRS. LANG.—Dexter Townsend! Why, it's scandalous. Everybody knows ~~that~~ he proposed to her three times and that she threw him over. It's an insult to—to—

MRS. LISTER.—To poor dear Alma Townsend. I quite agree with you. I should like to know how she feels—if she understands what it means.

MRS. LANG.—Well, if I were in her place—

Enter MRS. DEXTER TOWNSEND,

MRS. LANG. }
MRS. LISTER. } Why, Alma!

MRS. TOWNSEND.—Why, Ellen! Why, Mary! Oh, I'm so glad to meet you both. I want you to lunch with me to-morrow at one o'clock. I do so *hate* to be left alone. And poor Rhodora Pennington—Mrs. Boyd, I mean—her funeral is at noon, and our three male protectors will have to go to the cemetery, and Mr. Townsend is just going to take a cold bite before he goes, and so I'm left to lunch—

MRS. LANG (*coldly*).—I don't think Mr. Lang will go to the cemetery—

MRS. LISTER.—There is no reason why Mr. Lister—

MRS. TOWNSEND.—But, don't you know?—They're all to be pall-bearers! They can't refuse, of course.

MRS. LANG (*icily*).—Oh, no, certainly not.

MRS. LISTER (*below zero*).—I suppose it is an unavoidable duty.

MRS. LANG.—Alma, is that your *old* Surah? What *did* you do to it?

MRS. LISTER.—They *do* dye things so wonderfully nowadays!

SCENE.—*A Verandah in front of Mr. McCULLOM McINTOSH's house. MRS. McCULLOM McINTOSH seated, with fancy work. To her, enter Mr. WILLIAM JANS and Mr. MILO SMITH.*

MRS. McINTOSH (*with effusion*).—Oh, Mr. Jans, I'm so delighted to see you! And Mr. Smith, too! I never expect to see you busy men at this time in the afternoon. And how is Laura?—and Millicent? Now *don't* tell me that you've come to say that you can't go fishing with Mr. McIntosh to-morrow! He'll be so disappointed!

MR. JANS.—Well, the fact is—

MRS. McINTOSH.—You haven't been invited to be one of poor Rhodora Boyd's pall-bearers, have you? That would be *too* absurd. They say she's asked a regular party of her old conquests. Mr. Libriver just passed here and told me—Mr. Lister and John Lang and Dexter Townsend—

MR. JANS.—Yes, and me.

MRS. MCINTOSH.—Oh, *Mr. Jans!* And they do say—at least Mr. Libriver says—that she hasn't asked a man who hadn't proposed to her.

MR. JANS (*Dutchily*).—I d'no. But I'm asked, and—

MRS. MCINTOSH.—You don't mean to tell me that Mr. Smith is asked, too? Oh, that would be *too* impossible. You don't mean to tell me, Mr. Smith, that you furnished one of Rhodora's scalps ten years ago?

MR. SMITH.—You ought to know, Mrs. McIntosh. Or—no—perhaps not. You and Mac were to windward of the centre-board on Townsend's boat when *I* got the mitten. I suppose you couldn't hear us. But we were to leeward, and Miss Pennington said she hoped *all* proposals didn't echo.

MRS. MCINTOSH.—The wretched c—— but she's dead. Well, I'm thankful Mac—Mr. McIntosh never *could* abide that girl. He always said she was horribly bad form—poor thing, I oughtn't to speak so, I suppose. She's been punished enough.

MR. SMITH.—I'm glad you think so, Mrs. McIntosh. I hope you won't feel it necessary to advise Mac to refuse her last dying request.

MRS. MCINTOSH.—What—

MR. SMITH.—Oh, well, the fact is, Mrs. McIntosh, we only stopped in to say that as McIntosh and all the rest of us are asked to be pall-

bearers at Mrs. Boyd's funeral, you might ask Mac if it wouldn't be just as well to postpone the fishing party for a week or so. If you remember—will you be so kind? Thank you, good afternoon.

MR. JANS.—Good afternoon, Mrs. McIntosh.

SCENE.—*The Linen Closet, at the end of a sunny corridor in Mr. ALEXANDER SLOAN'S house. MRS. SLOAN inspecting her sheets and pillow-cases. To her, enter BRIDGET, her housemaid, with a basket full of linen, the Trega Evening Eagle on the top, folded.*

MRS. SLOAN.—Why, that surely isn't one of the new napkins!—oh, it's the evening paper. Dear me! how near-sighted I am getting! (*Takes it and opens it.*) You may put those linen sheets on the top shelf, Bridget. We'll hardly need them again this Fall. Oh, Bridget—here's poor Mrs. Boyd's obituary. You used to live at Colonel Pennington's before she was married, didn't you?

BRIDGET.—I did that, Mum.

MRS. SLOAN (*reading*).—"Mrs. Boyd's pall-bearers are fitly chosen from the most distinguished and prominent citizens of Trega." I'm sure I don't see why they should be. (*Reads.*) "Those invited to render the last honors to the deceased are Mr. George Lister—"

BRIDGET.—'Tis he was foriver at the house.

MRS. SLOAN (*reads*).—"Mr. John Lang—"

BRIDGET.—And him.

MRS. SLOAN (*reads*).—"Mr. Dexter Townsend—"

BRIDGET.—And him, too.

MRS. SLOAN (*reads*).—"Mr. McIntosh, Mr. William Jans, Mr. Milo Smith—"

BRIDGET.—And *thim*. Mr. Smith was her siv-inth.

MRS. SLOAN.—Her *what?*

BRIDGET.—Her sivinth. There was eight of thim proposed to her in the wan week.

MRS. SLOAN.—Why, Bridget! How can you possibly know *that?*

BRIDGET.—Sure, what does it mean whin a gintleman calls twice in th' wake an' thin stops like he was shot. An' who is the eight' gintleman to walk wid the corpse, Mum?

MRS. SLOAN.—That is all, Bridget. And those pillow-cases look shockingly! I never *saw* such ironing! (*Exit, hastily and sternly.*)

BRIDGET (*sola*).—Only siven of thim. Saints bless us! The pore lady'll go wan-sided to her grave!

SCENE.—*The Private Office of Mr. PARKER HALL.*

MR. HALL *writing*. To him, enter MR. ALECK SLOAN.

MR. SLOAN.—Ah, there, Parker!

MR. HALL.—Ah, there, Aleck! What brings *you* around so late in the day?

MR. SLOAN.—I just thought you might like to hear the names of the fellows Rhodora Pennington chose for her pall-bearers. (*Produces list.*)

MR. HALL (*sighs*).—Poor Rhodora! Too bad!
Fire ahead.

MR. SLOAN (*reads list*).—"George Lister."

MR. HALL.—*Ah!*

MR. SLOAN (*reads*).—"John Lang."

MR. HALL.—Oh!

MR. SLOAN (*reads*).—"Dexter Townsend."

MR. HALL.—Well!

MR. SLOAN (*reads*).—"McCullom McIntosh."

MR. HALL.—Say!—

MR. SLOAN (*reads*).—"William Jans."

MR. HALL.—The Deuce!

MR. SLOAN (*reads*).—"Milo Smith."

MR. HALL.—Great Cæsar's ghost! This is getting very personal!

MR. SLOAN.—Yes. (*Reads, nervously.*) "Alexander Sloan."

MR. HALL.—Whoo-o-o-o-up! You, too?

MR. SLOAN (*reads*).—"Parker Hall."

(*A long silence.*)

MR. HALL (*faintly*).—Oh, lord, she rounded us up, didn't she? Say, Aleck, can't this thing be suppressed, somehow?

MR. SLOAN.—It's in the evening paper.

(*Another long silence.*)

MR. HALL (*desperately*).—Come out and have a bottle with me?

MR. SLOAN.—I can't. I'm going down to Bitts's stable to buy that pony that Mrs. Sloan took such a shine to a month or so ago.

MR. HALL.—If *I* could get out of this for a pony—Oh, lord!

THE TWO CHURCHES OF 'QUAWKET

THE Reverend Colton M. Pursly, of Aquawket (commonly pronounced 'Quawket), looked out of his study window over a remarkably pretty New England prospect, stroked his thin, grayish side-whiskers, and sighed deeply. He was a pale, sober, ill-dressed Congregationalist minister of forty-two or three. He had eyes of willow-pattern blue, a large nose, and a large mouth, with a smile of forced amiability in the corners. He *was* amiable, perfectly amiable and innocuous—but that smile sometimes made people with a strong sense of humor want to kill him. The smile lingered even while he sighed.

Mr. Pursly's house was set upon a hill, although it was a modest abode. From his window he looked down one of those splendid streets that are the pride and glory of old towns in New England—a street fifty yards wide, arched with grand Gothic elms, bordered with houses of pale yellow and white, some in the homelike, simple yet dignified colonial style, some with great Doric porticos at the street end. And above the billowy green of the tree-tops rose two shapely spires, one to the right, of granite, one to the left, of sand-stone. It was the sight

of these two spires that made the Reverend Mr. Pursly sigh.

With a population of four thousand five hundred, 'Quawket had an Episcopal Church, a Roman Catholic Church, a Presbyterian Church, a Methodist Church, a Universalist Church (very small), a Baptist Church, a Hall for the "Seventh-Day Baptists" (used for secular purposes every day but Saturday), a Bethel, and—"The Two Churches"—as every one called the First and Second Congregational Churches. Fifteen years before, there had been but one Congregational Church, where a prosperous and contented congregation worshiped in a plain little old-fashioned red brick church on a side-street. Then, out of this very prosperity, came the idea of building a fine new free-stone church on Main Street. And, when the new church was half-built, the congregation split on the question of putting a "rain-box" in the new organ. It is quite unnecessary to detail how this quarrel over a handful of peas grew into a church war, with ramifications and interlacements and entanglements and side-issues and under-currents and embroilments of all sorts and conditions. In three years there was a First Congregational Church, in free-stone, solid, substantial, plain, and a Second Congregational Church in granite, something gingerbreadly, but showy and modish—for there are fashions in architecture as there are in millinery, and we cut our houses this way this year and that way the next. And these two

churches had half a congregation apiece, and a full-sized debt, and they lived together in a spirit of Christian unity, on Capulet and Montague terms. The people of the First Church called the people of the Second Church the "Sad-duceeceders," because there was no future for them, and the people of the Second Church called the people of the First Church the "Pharisee-me"'s. And this went on year after year, through the Winters when the foxes hugged their holes in the ground within the woods about 'Quawket, through the Summers when the birds of the air twittered in their nests in the great elms of Main Street.

If the First Church had a revival, the Second Church had a fair. If the pastor of the First Church exchanged with a distinguished preacher from Philadelphia, the organist of the Second Church got a celebrated tenor from Boston and had a service of song. This system after a time created a class in both churches known as "the floats," in contradistinction to the "pillars." The floats went from one church to the other according to the attractions offered. There were, in the end, more floats than pillars.

The Reverend Mr. Pursly inherited this contest from his predecessor. He had carried it on for three years. Finally, being a man of logical and precise mental processes, he called the head men of his congregation together, and told them what in worldly language might be set down thus:

There was room for one Congregational Church in 'Quawket, and for one only. The flock must be reunited in the parent fold. To do this a master stroke was necessary. They must build a Parish House. All of which was true beyond question—and yet—the church had a debt of \$20,000 and a Parish House would cost \$15,000.

And now the Reverend Mr. Pursly was sitting at his study window, wondering why all the rich men *would* join the Episcopal Church. He cast down his eyes, and saw a rich man coming up his path who could readily have given \$15,000 for a Parish House, and who might safely be expected to give \$1.50, if he were rightly approached. A shade of bitterness crept over Mr. Pursly's professional smile. Then a look of puzzled wonder took possession of his face. Brother Joash Hitt was regular in his attendance at church and at prayer-meeting; but he kept office-hours in his religion, as in everything else, and never before had he called upon his pastor.

Two minutes later, the minister was nervously shaking hands with Brother Joash Hitt.

"I'm very glad to see you, Mr. Hitt," he stammered, "very glad—I'm—I'm—"

"S'prised?" suggested Mr. Hitt, grimly.

"Won't you sit down?" asked Mr. Pursly.

Mr. Hitt sat down in the darkest corner of the room, and glared at his embarrassed host. He was a huge old man, bent, heavily-built, with grizzled dark hair, black eyes, skin tanned to a

mahogany brown, a heavy square under-jaw, and big leathery dew-laps on each side of it that looked as hard as the jaw itself. Brother Joash had been all things in his long life—sea-captain, commission merchant, speculator, slave-dealer even, people said—and all things to his profit. Of late years he had turned over his capital in money-lending, and people said that his great claw-like fingers had grown crooked with holding the tails of his mortgages.

A silence ensued. The pastor looked up and saw that Brother Joash had no intention of breaking it.

“Can I do anything for you, Mr. Hitt?” inquired Mr. Pursly.

“Ya-as,” said the old man. “Ye kin. I b’leeve you gin’lly git sump’n’ over ’n’ above your sellery when you preach a fun’l sermon?”

“Well, Mr. Hitt, it—yes—it is customary.”

“How much?”

“The usual honorarium is—h’m—ten dollars.”

“The—*whut?*”

“The—the fee.”

“Will you write me one for ten dollars?”

“Why—why—” said the minister, nervously; “I didn’t know that any one had—had died—”

“There hain’t no one died, ez I know. It’s *my* fun’l sermon I want.”

“But, my dear Mr. Hitt, I trust you are not—that you won’t—that—”

“Life’s a rope of sand, parson—you’d ought to know that—nor we don’t none of us know

when it's goin' to fetch loost. I'm most ninety now, an' I don't cal'late to git no younger."

"Well," said Mr. Pursly, faintly smiling; "when the time *does* come—"

"No, *sir!*" interrupted Mr. Hitt, with emphasis; "when the time *doos* come, I won't have no use for it. Th' ain't no sense in the way most folks is berrid. Whut's th' use of puttin' a man into a mahog'ny coffin, with a silver plate big's a dishpan, an' preachin' a fun'l sermon over him, an' costin' his estate good money, when he's only a poor deaf, dumb, blind fool corpse, an' don't get no good of it? *Naow*, I've be'n to the undertaker's, an' hed my coffin made under my own sooperveesion—good wood, straight grain, no knots—nuthin' fancy, but doorable. I've hed my tombstun cut, an' chose my text to put onto it—'we brung nuthin' into the world, an' it is certain we can take nuthin' out'—an' now I want my fun'l sermon, jes' as the other folks is goin' to hear it who don't pay nuthin' for it. Kin you hev it ready for me this day week?"

"I suppose so," said Mr. Pursly, weakly.

"I'll call fer it," said the old man. "Heern some talk about a Perrish House, didn't I?"

"Yes," began Mr. Pursly, his face lighting up.

"'Tain't no sech a bad idee," remarked Brother Joash. "Wal, good day." And he walked off before the minister could say anything more.

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One week later, Mr. Pursly again sat in his study, looking at Brother Joash, who had a second time settled himself in the dark corner.

It had been a terrible week for Mr. Pursly. He and his conscience, and his dream of the Parish House, had been shut up together working over that sermon, and waging a war of compromises. The casualties in this war were all on the side of the conscience.

"Read it!" commanded Brother Joash. The minister grew pale. This was more than he had expected. He grew pale and then red and then pale again.

"Go ahead!" said Brother Joash.

"Brethren," began Mr. Pursly, and then he stopped short. His pulpit voice sounded strange in his little study.

"Go ahead!" said Brother Joash.

"We are gathered together here to-day to pay a last tribute of respect and affection—"

"Clk!" There was a sound like the report of a small pistol. Mr. Pursly looked up. Brother Joash regarded him with stern intentness.

"—to one of the oldest and most prominent citizens of our town, a pillar of our church, and a monument of the civic virtues of probity, industry and wisdom, a man in whom we all took pride, and—"

"Clk!" Mr. Pursly looked up more quickly this time, and a faint suggestion of an expression just vanishing from Mr. Hitt's lips awakened in

his unsuspecting breast a horrible suspicion that Brother Joash had chuckled.

“—whose like we shall not soon again see in our midst. The children on the streets will miss his familiar face—”

“Say!” broke in Brother Joash, “how’d it be for a delegation of child’n to foller the remains, with flowers or sump’n? They’d volunteer if you give ’em the hint, wouldn’t they?”

“It would be—unusual,” said the minister.

“All right,” assented Mr. Hitt, “only an idee of mine. Thought they might like it. Go ahead!”

Mr. Pursly went ahead, haunted by an agonizing fear of that awful chuckle, if chuckle it was. But he got along without interruption until he reached a casual and guarded allusion to the widows and orphans without whom no funeral oration is complete. Here the metallic voice of Brother Joash rang out again.

“Say! Ef the widders and orphans send a wreath—or a Gates-Ajar—*ef* they do, mind ye! —you’ll hev it put a-top of the coffin, where folks’ll see it, wun’t ye?”

“Certainly,” said the Reverend Mr. Pursly, hastily; “his charities were unostentatious, as was the whole tenor of his life. In these days of spendthrift extravagance, our young men may well—”

“Say!” Brother Joash broke in once more. “Ef any one wuz to git up right there, an’ say that I wuz the derndest meanest, miserly, penu-

rious, parsimonious old hunks in 'Quawket, you wouldn't let him talk like that, would ye?"

"Unquestionably not, Mr. Hitt!" said the minister, in horror.

"Thought not. On'y thet's whut I heern one o' your deacons say about me the other day. Didn't know I heern him, but I did. I thought you wouldn't allow no such talk as that. Go ahead!"

"I must ask you, Mr. Hitt," Mr. Pursly said, perspiring at every pore, "to refrain from interruptions—or I—I really—can not continue."

"All right," returned Mr. Hitt, with perfect calmness. "Continner."

Mr. Pursly continued to the bitter end, with no further interruption that called for remonstrance. There were soft inarticulate sounds that seemed to him to come from Brother Joash's dark corner. But it might have been the birds in the *Ampelopsis Veitchii* that covered the house.

Brother Joash expressed no opinion, good or ill, of the address. He paid his ten dollars, in one-dollar bills, and took his receipt. But as the anxious minister followed him to the door, he turned suddenly and said:

"You was talkin' 'bout a Perrish House?"

"Yes—"

"Kin ye keep a secret?"

"I hope so—yes, certainly, Mr. Hitt."

"The' 'll be one."

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"I feel," said the Reverend Mr. Pursly to his

wife, "as if I had carried every stone of that Parish House on my shoulders and put it in its place. Can you make me a cup of tea, my dear?"

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The Summer days had begun to grow chill, and the great elms of 'Quawket were flecked with patches and spots of yellow, when, early one morning, the meagre little charity-boy whose duty it was to black Mr. Hitt's boots every day—it was a luxury he allowed himself in his old age—rushed, pale and frightened, into a neighboring grocery, and cried:

"Mist' Hitt's dead!"

"Guess not," said the grocer, doubtfully. "Brother Hitt's gut th' Old Nick's agency for 'Quawket, 'n' I ain't heerd th't he's been discharged for inattention to dooty."

"He's layin' there smilin'," said the boy.

"Smilin'?" repeated the grocer. "Guess I'd better go 'n' see."

In very truth, Brother Joash lay there in his bed, dead and cold, with a smile on his hard old lips, the first he had ever worn. And a most sardonic and discomfoting smile it was.

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The Reverend Mr. Pursly read Mr. Hitt's funeral address for the second time, in the First Congregational Church of 'Quawket. Every seat was filled; every ear was attentive. He stood

on the platform, and below him, supported on decorously covered trestles, stood the coffin that enclosed all that was mortal of Brother Joash Hitt. Mr. Pursly read with his face immovably set on the line of the clock in the middle of the choir-gallery railing. He did not dare to look down at the sardonic smile in the coffin below him; he did not dare to let his eye wander to the dark left-hand corner of the church, remembering the dark left-hand corner of his own study. And as he repeated each complimentary, obsequious, flattering platitude, a hideous, hysterical fear grew stronger and stronger within him that suddenly he would be struck dumb by the "clk!" of that mirthless chuckle that had sounded so much like a pistol-shot. His voice was hardly audible in the benediction.

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The streets of 'Quawket were at their gayest and brightest when the mourners drove home from the cemetery at the close of the noontide hour. The mourners were principally the deacons and elders of the First Church. The Reverend Mr. Pursly lay back in his seat with a pleasing yet fatigued consciousness of duty performed and martyrdom achieved. He was exhausted, but humbly happy. As they drove along, he looked with a speculative eye on one or two eligible sites for the Parish House. His companion in the carriage was Mr. Uriel Hankinson, Brother Joash's lawyer, whose entire character

had been aptly summed up by one of his fellow-citizens in conferring on him the designation of "a little Joash for one cent."

"Parson," said Mr. Hankinson, breaking a long silence, "that was a fust-rate oration you made."

"I'm glad to hear you say so," replied Mr. Pursly, his chronic smile broadening.

"You treated the deceased right handsome, considerin'," went on the lawyer Hankinson.

"Considering what?" inquired Mr. Pursly, in surprise.

"Considerin'—well, *considerin'*—" replied Mr. Hankinson, with a wave of his hand. "You must feel to be reel disapp'inted 'bout the Parish House, I sh'd s'pose."

"The Parish House?" repeated the Reverend Mr. Pursly, with a cold chill at his heart, but with dignity in his voice. "You may not be aware, Mr. Hankinson, that I have Mr. Hitt's promise that we should have a Parish House. And Mr. Hitt was—was—a man of his word." This conclusion sounded to his own ears a trifle lame and impotent.

"Guess you had his promise that there *should* be a Parish House," corrected the lawyer, with a chuckle that might have been a faint echo of Brother Joash's.

"Well?"

"Well—the Second Church gits it. I draw'd his will. Good day, parson, I'll 'light here. Air's kind o' cold, ain't it?"

THE LOVE-LETTERS OF SMITH

WHEN the little seamstress had climbed to her room in the story over the top story of the great brick tenement house in which she lived, she was quite tired out. If you do not understand what a story over a top story is, you must remember that there are no limits to human greed, and hardly any to the height of tenement houses. When the man who owned that seven-story tenement found that he could rent another floor, he found no difficulty in persuading the guardians of our building laws to let him clap another story on the roof, like a cabin on the deck of a ship; and in the southeasterly of the four apartments on this floor the little seamstress lived. You could just see the top of her window from the street—the huge cornice that had capped the original front, and that served as her window-sill now, quite hid all the lower part of the story on top of the top-story.

The little seamstress was scarcely thirty years old, but she was such an old-fashioned little body in so many of her looks and ways that I had almost spelled her sempstress, after the fashion of our grandmothers. She had been a comely

body, too; and would have been still, if she had not been thin and pale and anxious-eyed.

She was tired out to-night because she had been working hard all day for a lady who lived far up in the "New Wards" beyond Harlem River, and after the long journey home, she had to climb seven flights of tenement-house stairs. She was too tired, both in body and in mind, to cook the two little chops she had brought home. She would save them for breakfast, she thought. So she made herself a cup of tea on the miniature stove, and ate a slice of dry bread with it. It was too much trouble to make toast.

But after dinner she watered her flowers. She was never too tired for that; and the six pots of geraniums that caught the south sun on the top of the cornice did their best to repay her. Then she sat down in her rocking chair by the window and looked out. Her eyry was high above all the other buildings, and she could look across some low roofs opposite, and see the further end of Tompkins Square, with its sparse Spring green showing faintly through the dusk. The eternal roar of the city floated up to her and vaguely troubled her. She was a country girl, and although she had lived for ten years in New York, she had never grown used to that ceaseless murmur. To-night she felt the languor of the new season as well as the heaviness of physical exhaustion. She was almost too tired to go to bed.

She thought of the hard day done and the

hard day to be begun after the night spent on the hard little bed. She thought of the peaceful days in the country, when she taught school in the Massachusetts village where she was born. She thought of a hundred small slights that she had to bear from people better fed than bred. She thought of the sweet green fields that she rarely saw nowadays. She thought of the long journey forth and back that must begin and end her morrow's work, and she wondered if her employer would think to offer to pay her fare. Then she pulled herself together. She must think of more agreeable things, or she could not sleep. And as the only agreeable things she had to think about were her flowers, she looked at the garden on top of the cornice.

A peculiar gritting noise made her look down, and she saw a cylindrical object that glittered in the twilight, advancing in an irregular and uncertain manner toward her flower-pots. Looking closer, she saw that it was a pewter beer-mug, which somebody in the next apartment was pushing with a two-foot rule. On top of the beer-mug was a piece of paper, and on this paper was written, in a sprawling, half-formed hand:

*porter
pleas excuse the libberty And
drink it*

The seamstress started up in terror, and shut the window. She remembered that there was a

man in the next apartment. She had seen him on the stairs, on Sundays. He seemed a grave, decent person; but—he must be drunk. She sat down on her bed, all a-tremble. Then she reasoned with herself. The man was drunk, that was all. He probably would not annoy her further. And if he did, she had only to retreat to Mrs. Mulvaney's apartment in the rear, and Mr. Mulvaney, who was a highly respectable man and worked in a boiler-shop, would protect her. So, being a poor woman who had already had occasion to excuse—and refuse—two or three “liberties” of like sort, she made up her mind to go to bed like a reasonable seamstress, and she did. She was rewarded, for when her light was out, she could see in the moonlight that the two-foot rule appeared again, with one joint bent back, hitched itself into the mug-handle, and withdrew the mug.

The next day was a hard one for the little seamstress, and she hardly thought of the affair of the night before until the same hour had come around again, and she sat once more by her window. Then she smiled at the remembrance. “Poor fellow,” she said in her charitable heart, “I’ve no doubt he’s *awfully* ashamed of it now. Perhaps he was never tipsy before. Perhaps he didn’t know there was a lone woman in here to be frightened.”

Just then she heard a gritting sound. She looked down. The pewter pot was in front of her, and the two-foot rule was slowly retiring.

On the pot was a piece of paper, and on the paper was:

*porter
good for the helth
it makes meet*

This time the little seamstress shut her window with a bang of indignation. The color rose to her pale cheeks. She thought that she would go down to see the janitor at once. Then she remembered the seven flights of stairs; and she resolved to see the janitor in the morning. Then she went to bed and saw the mug drawn back just as it had been drawn back the night before.

The morning came, but, somehow, the seamstress did not care to complain to the janitor. She hated to make trouble—and the janitor might think—and—and—well, if the wretch did it again she would speak to him herself, and that would settle it.

And so, on the next night, which was a Thursday, the little seamstress sat down by her window, resolved to settle the matter. And she had not sat there long, rocking in the creaking little rocking-chair which she had brought with her from her old home, when the pewter pot hove in sight, with a piece of paper on the top.

This time the legend read:

*Perhaps you are afrade i will
adress you
i am not that kind*

The seamstress did not quite know whether to laugh or to cry. But she felt that the time had come for speech. She leaned out of her window and addressed the twilight heaven.

“Mr.—Mr.—sir—I—will you *please* put your head out of the window so that I can speak to you?”

The silence of the other room was undisturbed. The seamstress drew back, blushing. But before she could nerve herself for another attack, a piece of paper appeared on the end of the two-foot rule.

*when i Say a thing i
mene it
i have Sed i would not
Adress you and i
Will not*

What was the little seamstress to do? She stood by the window and thought hard about it. Should she complain to the janitor? But the creature was perfectly respectful. No doubt he meant to be kind. He certainly was kind, to waste these pots of porter on her. She remembered the last time—and the first—that she had drunk porter. It was at home, when she was a young girl, after she had had the diphtheria. She remembered how good it was, and how it had given her back her strength. And without one thought of what she was doing, she lifted the pot of porter and took one little reminiscent sip—two little reminiscent sips—and became

aware of her utter fall and defeat. She blushed now as she had never blushed before, put the pot down, closed the window, and fled to her bed like a deer to the woods.

And when the porter arrived the next night, bearing the simple appeal:

*Dont be afrade of it
drink it all*

the little seamstress arose and grasped the pot firmly by the handle, and poured its contents over the earth around her largest geranium. She poured the contents out to the last drop, and then she dropped the pot, and ran back and sat on her bed and cried, with her face hid in her hands.

“Now,” she said to herself, “you’ve done it! And you’re just as nasty and hard-hearted and suspicious and mean as—as pusley!”

And she wept to think of her hardness of heart. “He will never give me a chance to say I am sorry,” she thought. And, really, she might have spoken kindly to the poor man, and told him that she was much obliged to him, but that he really mustn’t ask her to drink porter with him.

“But it’s all over and done now,” she said to herself as she sat at her window on Saturday night. And then she looked at the cornice, and saw the faithful little pewter pot traveling slowly toward her.

She was conquered. This act of Christian for-

bearance was too much for her kindly spirit. She read the inscription on the paper:

*porter is good for Flours
but better for Fokes*

and she lifted the pot to her lips, which were not half so red as her cheeks, and took a good, hearty, grateful draught.

She sipped in thoughtful silence after this first plunge, and presently she was surprised to find the bottom of the pot in full view.

On the table at her side a few pearl buttons were screwed up in a bit of white paper. She untwisted the paper and smoothed it out, and wrote in a tremulous hand—she *could* write a very neat hand—

Thanks.

This she laid on the top of the pot, and in a moment the bent two-foot rule appeared and drew the mail-carriage home. Then she sat still, enjoying the warm glow of the porter, which seemed to have permeated her entire being with a heat that was not at all like the unpleasant and oppressive heat of the atmosphere, an atmosphere heavy with the Spring damp. A gritting on the tin aroused her. A piece of paper lay under her eyes.

*fine groing weather
Smith*

it said.

Now it is unlikely that in the whole round and range of conversational commonplaces there was

one other greeting that could have induced the seamstress to continue the exchange of communications. But this simple and homely phrase touched her country heart. What did "*groing weather*" matter to the toilers in this waste of brick and mortar? This stranger must be, like herself, a country-bred soul, longing for the new green and the upturned brown mould of the country fields. She took up the paper, and wrote under the first message:

Fine

But that seemed curt; *for* she added: "*for*" what? She did not know. At last in desperation she put down *potatos*. The piece of paper was withdrawn and came back with an addition:

Too mist for potatos.

And when the little seamstress had read this, and grasped the fact that *m-i-s-t* represented the writer's pronunciation of "moist," she laughed softly to herself. A man whose mind, at such a time, was seriously bent upon *potatos*, was not a man to be feared. She found a half-sheet of note-paper, and wrote:

I lived in a small village before I came to New York, but I am afraid I do not know much about farming. Are you a farmer?

The answer came:

*have ben most Every thing
farmed a Spel in Maine
Smith*

As she read this, the seamstress heard a church clock strike nine.

"Bless me, is it so late?" she cried, and she hurriedly penciled *Good Night*, thrust the paper out, and closed the window. But a few minutes later, passing by, she saw yet another bit of paper on the cornice, fluttering in the evening breeze. It said only *good nite*, and after a moment's hesitation, the little seamstress took it in and gave it shelter.

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After this, they were the best of friends. Every evening the pot appeared, and while the seamstress drank from it at her window, Mr. Smith drank from its twin at his; and notes were exchanged as rapidly as Mr. Smith's early education permitted. They told each other their histories, and Mr. Smith's was one of travel and variety, which he seemed to consider quite a matter of course. He had followed the sea, he had farmed, he had been a logger and a hunter in the Maine woods. Now he was foreman of an East River lumber yard, and he was prospering. In a year or two he would have enough laid by to go home to Bucksport and buy a share in a ship-building business. All this dribbled out in the course of a jerky but variegated correspondence, in which autobiographic details were mixed with reflections, moral and philosophical.

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A few samples will give an idea of Mr. Smith's style:

*i was one trip to van demens
land*

To which the seamstress replied:

It must have been very interesting.

But Mr. Smith disposed of this subject very briefly:

it wornt

Further he vouchsafed:

*i seen a chinese cook in
hong kong could cook flapjacks
like your Mother*

*a mishnery that sells Rum
is the menest of Gods crechers*

*a bulfite is not what it is
cract up to Be*

*the dagos are wussen the
brutes*

*i am 6 1¾
but my Father was 6 foot 4*

The seamstress had taught school one Winter, and she could not refrain from making an at-

tempt to reform Mr. Smith's orthography. One evening, in answer to this communication:

*i killd a Bare in Maine 600
lbs waight*

she wrote:

Isn't it generally spelled Bear?

but she gave up the attempt when he responded:

*a bare is a mene animle any
way you spel him*

The Spring wore on, and the Summer came, and still the evening drink and the evening correspondence brightened the close of each day for the little seamstress. And the draught of porter put her to sleep each night, giving her a calmer rest than she had ever known during her stay in the noisy city; and it began, moreover, to make a little "*meet*" for her. And then the thought that she was going to have an hour of pleasant companionship somehow gave her courage to cook and eat her little dinner, however tired she was. The seamstress's cheeks began to blossom with the June roses.

And all this time Mr. Smith kept his vow of silence unbroken, though the seamstress sometimes tempted him with little ejaculations and exclamations to which he might have responded. He was silent and invisible. Only the smoke of his pipe, and the clink of his mug as he set it down on the cornice, told her that a living, mate-

rial Smith was her correspondent. They never met on the stairs, for their hours of coming and going did not coincide. Once or twice they passed each other in the street—but Mr. Smith looked straight ahead of him, about a foot over her head. The little seamstress thought he was a very fine-looking man, with his six feet one and three-quarters and his thick brown beard. Most people would have called him plain.

Once she spoke to him. She was coming home one Summer evening, and a gang of corner-loafers stopped her and demanded money to buy beer, as is their custom. Before she had time to be frightened, Mr. Smith appeared—whence, she knew not—scattered the gang like chaff, and, collaring two of the human hyenas, kicked them, with deliberate, ponderous, alternate kicks, until they writhed in ineffable agony. When he let them crawl away, she turned to him and thanked him warmly, looking very pretty now, with the color in her cheeks. But Mr. Smith answered no word. He stared over her head, grew red in the face, fidgeted nervously, but held his peace until his eyes fell on a rotund Teuton, passing by.

“Say, Dutchy!” he roared.

The German stood aghast.

“I ain’t got nothing to write with!” thundered Mr. Smith, looking him in the eye. And then the man of his word passed on his way.

And so the Summer went on, and the two correspondents chatted silently from window to window, hid from sight of all the world below by

the friendly cornice. And they looked out over the roof, and saw the green of Tompkins Square grow darker and dustier as the months went on.

Mr. Smith was given to Sunday trips into the suburbs, and he never came back without a bunch of daisies or black-eyed Susans or, later, asters or golden-rod for the little seamstress. Sometimes, with a sagacity rare in his sex, he brought her a whole plant, with fresh loam for potting.

He gave her also a reel in a bottle, which, he wrote, he had "*maid*" himself, and some coral, and a dried flying-fish, that was somewhat fearful to look upon, with its sword-like fins and its hollow eyes. At first, she could not go to sleep with that flying-fish hanging on the wall.

But he surprised the little seamstress very much one cool September evening, when he shoved this letter along the cornice:

Respected and Honored Madam:

Having long and vainly sought an opportunity to convey to you the expression of my sentiments, I now avail myself of the privilege of epistolary communication to acquaint you with the fact that the Emotions, which you have raised in my breast, are those which should point to Connubial Love and Affection rather than to simple Friendship. In short, Madam, I have the Honor to approach you with a Proposal, the acceptance of which will fill me with ecstatic Gratitude, and enable me to extend to you those Protecting cares, which the Matrimonial Bond makes at once the Duty and the Privilege of him, who would, at no distant date, lead to the Hymeneal Altar one whose charms and virtues should suffice to kindle its Flames, without extraneous Aid.

I remain, Dear Madam,
Your Humble Servant and
Ardent Adorer, J. Smith.

The little seamstress gazed at this letter a long time. Perhaps she was wondering in what Ready Letter-Writer of the last century Mr. Smith had found his form. Perhaps she was amazed at the results of his first attempt at punctuation. Perhaps she was thinking of something else, for there were tears in her eyes and a smile on her small mouth.

But it must have been a long time, and Mr. Smith must have grown nervous, for presently another communication came along the line where the top of the cornice was worn smooth. It read:

If not understood will you marry me?

The little seamstress seized a piece of paper and wrote:

If I say Yes, will you speak to me?

Then she rose and passed it out to him, leaning out of the window, and their faces met.

ZENOBIA'S INFIDELITY

DR. TIBBITT stood on the porch of Mrs. Pennypepper's boarding-house, and looked up and down the deserted Main Street of Sagawaug with a contented smile, the while he buttoned his driving-gloves. The little doctor had good cause to be content with himself and with everything else—with his growing practice, with his comfortable boarding-house, with his own good looks, with his neat attire, and with the world in general. He could not but be content with Sagawaug, for there never was a prettier country town. The Doctor looked across the street and picked out the very house that he proposed to buy when the one remaining desire of his soul was gratified. It was a house with a hip-roof and with a long garden running down to the river.

There was no one in the house to-day, but there was no one in any of the houses. Not even a pair of round bare arms was visible among the clothes that waved in the August breeze in every back-yard. It was Circus Day in Sagawaug.

The Doctor was climbing into his gig when a yell startled him. A freckled boy with saucer eyes dashed around the corner.

"Doctor!" he gasped, "come quick! The circus got a-fire an' the trick elephant's most roasted!"

"Don't be silly, Johnny" said the Doctor, reprovingly.

"Hope to die — Honest Injun — cross my breast!" said the boy. The Doctor knew the sacredness of this juvenile oath.

"Get in here with me," he said, "and if I find you're trying to be funny, I'll drop you in the river."

As they drove toward the outskirts of the town, Johnny told his tale.

"Now," he began, "the folks was all out of the tent after the show was over, and one of the circus men, he went to the oil-barrel in the green wagon with Dan'l in the Lion's Den onto the outside of it, an' he took in a candle an' left it there, and fust thing the barrel busted, an' he wasn't hurt a bit, but the trick elephant she was burned awful, an' the ring-tailed baboon, he was so scared he had a fit. Say, did you know baboons had fits?"

When they reached the circus-grounds, they found a crowd around a small side-show tent. A strong odor of burnt leather confirmed Johnny's story. Dr. Tibbitt pushed his way through the throng, and gazed upon the huge beast, lying on her side on the grass, her broad shoulder charred and quivering. Her bulk expanded and contracted with spasms of agony, and from time to time she uttered a moaning sound. On her

head was a structure of red cloth, about the size of a bushel-basket, apparently intended to look like a British soldier's forage-cap. This was secured by a strap that went under her chin—if an elephant has a chin. This scarlet cheese-box every now and then slipped down over her eye, and the faithful animal patiently, in all her anguish, adjusted it with her prehensile trunk.

By her side stood her keeper and the proprietor of the show, a large man with a dyed moustache, a wrinkled face, and hair oiled and frizzed. These two bewailed their loss alternately.

"The boss elephant in the business!" cried the showman. "Barnum never had no trick elephant like Zenobia. And them lynes and Dan'l was painted in new before I took the road this season. Oh, there's been a hoodoo on me since I showed ag'inst the Sunday-school picnic!"

"That there elephant's been like my own child," groaned the keeper, "or my own wife, I may say. I've slep' alongside of her every night for fourteen damn years."

The Doctor had been carefully examining his patient.

"If there is any analogy—" he began.

"Neurology!" snorted the indignant showman; "'tain't neurology, you jay pill-box, she's *cooked!*"

"If there is any analogy, repeated Dr. Tibbitt, flushing a little, "between her case and that of a human being, I think I can save your ele-

phant. Get me a barrel of linseed oil, and drive these people away."

The Doctor's orders were obeyed with eager submission. He took off his coat, and went to work. He had never doctored an elephant, and the job interested him. At the end of an hour, Zenobia's sufferings were somewhat alleviated. She lay on her side, chained tightly to the ground, and swaddled in bandages. Her groans had ceased.

"I'll call to-morrow at noon," said the Doctor—"good gracious, what's that?" Zenobia's trunk was playing around his waistband.

"She wants to shake hands with you," her keeper explained. "She's a lady, she is, and she knows you done her good."

"I'd rather not have anything of the sort," said the Doctor, decisively.

When Dr. Tibbitt called at twelve on the morrow, he found Zenobia's tent neatly roped in, an amphitheatre of circus-benches constructed around her, and this amphitheatre packed with people.

"Got a quarter apiece from them jays," whispered the showman, "jest to see you dress them wovnds." Subsequently the showman relieved his mind to a casual acquaintance. "He's got a heart like a gun-flint, that doctor," he said; "made me turn out every one of them jays and give 'em their money back before he'd lay a hand to Zenobia."

But if the Doctor suppressed the clinic, neither he nor the showman suffered. From dawn till dusk people came from miles around to stare a quarter's worth at the burnt elephant. Once in a while, as a rare treat, the keeper lifted a corner of her bandages, and revealed the seared flesh. The show went off in a day or two, leaving Zenobia to recover at leisure; and as it wandered westward, it did an increased business simply because it had had a burnt trick elephant. Such, dear friends, is the human mind.

The Doctor fared even better. The fame of his new case spread far and wide. People seemed to think that if he could cure an elephant he could cure anything. He was called into consultation in neighboring towns. Women in robust health imagined ailments, so as to send for him and ask him shuddering questions about "that *wretched* animal." The trustees of the orphan-asylum made him staff-physician—in this case the Doctor thought he could trace a connection of ideas, in which children and a circus were naturally associated. And the local newspaper called him a *savant*.

He called every day upon Zenobia, who greeted him with trumpetings of joyful welcome. She also desired to shake hands with him, and her keeper had to sit on her head and hold her trunk to repress the familiarity. In two weeks she was cured, except for extensive and permanent scars, and she waited only for a favorable opportunity to rejoin the circus.

The Doctor had got his fee in advance.

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Upon a sunny afternoon in the last of August, Dr. Tibbitt jogged slowly toward Sagawaug in his neat little gig. He had been to Pelion, the next town, to call upon Miss Minetta Bunker, the young lady whom he desired to install in the house with the garden running down to the river. He had found her starting out for a drive in Tom Matson's dog-cart. Now, the Doctor feared no foe, in medicine or in love; but when a young woman is inscrutable as to the state of her affections, when the richest young man in the county is devoting himself to her, and when the young lady's mother is backing the rich man, a young country doctor may well feel perplexed and anxious over his chance of the prize.

The Doctor was so troubled, indeed, that he paid no heed to a heavy, repeated thud behind him, on the macadamized road. His gentle little mare heard it, though, and began to curvet and prance. The Doctor was pulling her in, and calming her with a "Soo—Soo—down, girl, down!" when he interrupted himself to shout:

"Great Cæsar! get off me!"

Something like a yard of rubber hose had come in through the side of the buggy, and was rubbing itself against his face. He looked around, and the cold sweat stood out on him as he saw Zenobia, her chain dragging from her hind-foot, her red cap a-cock on her head, trot-

ting along by the side of his vehicle, snorting with joy, and evidently bent on lavishing her pliant, serpentine, but leathery caresses upon his person.

His fear vanished in a moment. The animal's intentions were certainly pacific, to put it mildly. He reflected that if he could keep his horse ahead of her, he could toll her around the block and back toward her tent. He had hardly guessed, as yet, the depth of the impression which he had made upon Zenobia's heart, which must have been a large organ, if the size of her ears was any indication—according to the popular theory.

He was on the very edge of the town, and his road took him by a house where he had a new and highly valued patient, the young wife of old Deacon Burgee. Her malady being of a nature that permitted it, Mrs. Burgee was in the habit of sitting at her window when the Doctor made his rounds, and indicating the satisfactory state of her health by a bow and a smile. On this occasion she fled from the window with a shriek. Her mother, a formidable old lady under a red false-front, came to the window, shrieked likewise, and slammed down the sash.

The Doctor tolled his elephant around the block without further misadventure, and they started up the road toward Zenobia's tent, Zenobia caressing her benefactor while shudders of antipathy ran over his frame. In a few minutes the keeper hove in sight. Zenobia saw him first,

blew a shrill blast on her trumpet, close to the Doctor's ear, bolted through a snake-fence, lumbered across a turnip-field, and disappeared in a patch of woods, leaving the Doctor to quiet his excited horse and to face the keeper, who advanced with rage in his eye.

"What do you mean, you cuss," he began, "weaning a man's elephant's affections away from him? You ain't got no more morals than a Turk, you ain't. That elephant an' me has been side-partners for fourteen years, an' here you come between us."

"I don't want your confounded elephant," roared the Doctor; "why don't you keep it chained up?"

"She busted her chain to git after you," replied the keeper. "Oh, I seen you two lally-gaggin' all along the road. I knowed you wa'n't no good the first time I set eyes on yer, a-sayin' hoodoo words over the poor dumb beast."

The Doctor resolved to banish "analogy" from his vocabulary.

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The next morning, about four o'clock, Dr. Tibbitt awoke with a troubled mind. He had driven home after midnight from a late call, and he had had an uneasy fancy that he saw a great shadowy bulk ambling along in the mist-hid fields by the roadside. He jumped out of bed and went to the window. Below him, completely covering Mrs. Pennypepper's nasturtium bed, her pre-

hensile trunk ravaging the early chrysanthemums, stood Zenobia, swaying to and fro, the dew glistening on her seamed sides beneath the early morning sunlight. The Doctor hastily dressed himself and slipped downstairs and out, to meet this Frankenstein's monster of affection.

There was but one thing to do. Zenobia would follow him wherever he went—she rushed madly through Mrs. Pennypepper's roses to greet him—and his only course was to lead her out of the town before people began to get up, and to detain her in some remote meadow until he could get her keeper to come for her and secure her by force or stratagem. He set off by the least frequented streets, and he experienced a pang of horror as he remembered that his way led him past the house of his one professional rival in Sagawaug. Suppose Dr. Pettengill should be coming home or going out as he passed!

He did not meet Dr. Pettengill. He did meet Deacon Burgee, who stared at him with more of rage than of amazement in his wrinkled countenance. The Deacon was carrying a large bundle of embroidered linen and flannel, that must have been tied up in a hurry.

"Good morning, Deacon," the Doctor hailed him, with as much ease of manner as he could assume. "How's Mrs. Burgee?"

"She's doin' fust rate, no thanks to no circus doctors!" snorted the Deacon. "An' if you want to know anything further concernin' her health, you ask Dr. Pettengill. *He's* got more sense

than to go trailin' around the streets with a parboiled elephant behind him, a-frightening women-folks a hull month afore the'r time."

"Why, Deacon!" cried the Doctor, "what—what is it?"

"It's a boy," responded the Deacon sternly; "and it's God's own mercy that 'twa'n't born with a trunk and a tail."

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The Doctor found a secluded pasture, near the woods that encircled the town, and there he sat him down, in the corner of a snake-fence, to wait until some farmer or market-gardener should pass by, to carry his message to the keeper. He had another message to send, too. He had several cases that must be attended to at once. Unless he could get away from his pachydermatous familiar, Pettengill must care for his cases that morning. It was hard—but what was he to do?

Zenobia stood by his side, dividing her attention between the caresses she bestowed on him and the care she was obliged to take of her red cap, which was not tightly strapped on, and slipped in various directions at every movement of her gigantic head. She was unmistakably happy. From time to time she trumpeted cheerily. She plucked up tufts of grass, and offered them to the Doctor. He refused them, and she ate them herself. Once he took a daisy from her, absent-mindedly, and she was so greatly

pleased that she smashed his hat in her endeavors to pet him. The Doctor was a kind-hearted man. He had to admit that Zenobia meant well. He patted her trunk, and made matters worse. Her elephantine ecstasy came near being the death of him.

Still the farmer came not, nor the market-gardener. Dr. Tibbitt began to believe that he had chosen a meadow that was *too* secluded. At last two boys appeared. After they had stared at him and at Zenobia for half an hour, one of them agreed to produce Dr. Pettengill and Zenobia's keeper for fifty cents. Dr. Pettengill was the first to arrive. He refused to come nearer than the furthest limit of the pasture.

"Hello, Doctor," he called out, "hear you've been seeing elephants. Want me to take your cases? Guess I can. Got a half-hour free. Brought some bromide down for you, if you'd like to try it."

To judge from his face, Zenobia was invisible. But his presence alarmed that sensitive animal. She crowded up close to the fence, and every time she flicked her skin to shake off the flies she endangered the equilibrium of the Doctor, who was sitting on the top rail, for dignity's sake. He shouted his directions to his colleague, who shouted back professional criticisms.

"Salicylate of soda for that old woman? What's the matter with salicylate of cinchonidia? Don't want to kill her before you get out of this swamp, do you?"

Dr. Tibbitt was not a profane man; but at this moment he could not restrain himself.

"*Damn you!*" he said, with such vigor that the elephant gave a convulsive start. The Doctor felt his seat depart from under him—he was going—going into space for a brief moment, and then he scrambled up out of the soft mud of the cow-wallow back of the fence on which he had been sitting. Zenobia had backed against the fence.

The keeper arrived soon after. He had only reached the meadow when Zenobia lifted her trunk in the air, emitted a mirthful toot, and struck out for the woods with the picturesque and cumbersome gallop of a mastodon pup.

"*Dern you,*" said the keeper to Dr. Tibbitt, who was trying to fasten his collar, which had broken loose in his fall; "if the boys was here, and I hollered 'Hey Rube!'—there wouldn't be enough left of yer to spread a plaster fer a baby's bile!"

The Doctor made himself look as decent as the situation allowed, and then he marched toward the town with the light of a firm resolve illuminating his face. The literature of his childhood had come to his aid. He remembered the unkind tailor who pricked the elephant's trunk. It seemed to him that the tailor was a rather good fellow.

"If that elephant's disease is gratitude," thought the Doctor, "I'll give her an antidote."

He went to the drug-store, and, as he went,

he pulled out a blank pad and wrote down a prescription, from mere force of habit. It read thus:



PESSLS & MORTON,

DRUGGISTS,

Commercial Block, Main Street, Sagawaug.

PRESCRIPTIONS CAREFULLY COMPOUNDED.

R *Calcium sul* $\bar{z}ij$
Calcis chl $\bar{z}xij$
Supercan pulv $\bar{z}i$
Md et ft. Bol.
fig. Take at once. *Withit*

When the druggist looked at it, he was taken short of breath.

"What's this?" he asked—"a bombshell?"

"Put it up," said the Doctor, "and don't talk so much." He lingered nervously on the druggist's steps, looking up and down the street. He had sent a boy to order the stable-man to harness his gig. By-and-by, the druggist put his head out of the door.

"I've got some asafœtida pills," he said, "that are kind o' tired, and half a pound of whale-oil soap that's higher 'n Haman—"

"Put 'em in!" said the Doctor, grimly, as he saw Zenobia coming in sight far down the street.

She came up while the Doctor was waiting for the bolus. Twenty-three boys were watching them, although it was only seven o'clock in the morning.

"Down, Zenobia!" said the Doctor, thoughtlessly, as he might have addressed a dog. He was talking with the druggist, and Zenobia was patting his ear with her trunk. Zenobia sank to her knees. The Doctor did not notice her. She folded her trunk about him, lifted him to her back, rose, with a heave and a sway, to her feet, and started up the road. The boys cheered. The Doctor got off on the end of an elm-branch. His descent was watched from nineteen second-story windows.

His gig came to meet him at last, and he entered it and drove rapidly out of town, with Zenobia trotting contentedly behind him. As soon as he had passed Deacon Burgee's house, he drew rein, and Zenobia approached, while his perspiring mare stood on her hind legs.

"Zenobia—pill!" said the Doctor.

As she had often done in her late illness, Zenobia opened her mouth at the word of command, and swallowed the infernal bolus. Then they started up again, and the Doctor headed for Zenobia's tent.

But Zenobia's pace was sluggish. She had been dodging about the woods for two nights, and she was tired. When the Doctor whipped up, she seized the buggy by any convenient projection, and held it back. This damaged the buggy and

frightened the horse; but it accomplished Zenobia's end. It was eleven o'clock before Jake Bumgardner's "Half-Way House" loomed up white, afar down the dusty road, and the Doctor knew that his round-about way had at length brought him near to the field where the circus-tent had been pitched.

He drove on with a lighter heart in his bosom. He had not heard Zenobia behind him for some time. He did not know what had become of her, or what she was doing, but he learned later.

The Doctor had compounded a pill well calculated to upset Zenobia's stomach. That it would likewise give her a consuming thirst he had not considered. But chemistry was doing its duty without regard to him. A thirst like a furnace burned within Zenobia. Capsicum and chloride of lime were doing their work. She gasped and groaned. She searched for water. She filled her trunk at a wayside trough and poured the contents into her mouth. Then she sucked up a puddle or two. Then she came to Bumgardner's, where a dozen kegs of lager-beer and a keg of what passed at Bumgardner's for gin stood on the sidewalk. Zenobia's circus experience had taught her what a water-barrel meant. She applied her knowledge. With her forefoot she deftly staved in the head of one keg after another, and with her trunk she drew up the beer and the gin, and delivered them to her stomach. If you think her taste at fault, remember the bolus.

Bumgardner rushed out and assailed her with a bung-starter. She turned upon him and squirted lager-beer over him until he was covered with an iridescent lather of foam from head to foot. Then she finished the kegs and went on her way, to overtake the Doctor.

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The Doctor was speeding his mare merrily along, grateful for even a momentary relief from Zenobia's attentions, when, at one and the same time, he heard a heavy, uncertain thumping on the road behind him, and the quick patter of a trotter's hoofs on the road ahead of him. He glanced behind him first, and saw Zenobia. She swayed from side to side, more than was her wont. Her red cap was far down over her left eye. Her aspect was rakish, and her gait was unsteady. The Doctor did not know it, but Zenobia was drunk.

Zenobia was sick, but intoxication dominated her sickness. Even sulphide of calcium withdrew courteously before the might of beer and gin. Rocking from side to side, reeling across the road and back, trumpeting in imbecile inexpressive tones, Zenobia advanced.

The Doctor looked forward. Tom Matson sat in his dog-cart, with Miss Bunker by his side. His horse had caught sight of Zenobia, and he was rearing high in air, and whinnying in terror. Before Tom could pull him down, he made a sudden break, overturned the dog-cart, and flung Tom and Miss Minetta Bunker on a bank by the

side of the road. It was a soft bank, well-grown with mint and stinging-nettles, just above a creek. Tom had scarce landed before he was up and off, running hard across the fields.

Miss Minetta rose and looked at him with fire in her eyes.

"Well!" she said aloud; "I'd like Mother to see you *now!*"

The Doctor had jumped out of his gig and let his little mare go galloping up the road. He had his arm about Miss Minetta's waist when he turned to face his familiar demon—which may have accounted for the pluck in his face.

But Zenobia was a hundred yards down the road, and she was utterly incapable of getting any further. She trumpeted once or twice, then she wavered like a reed in the wind; her legs weakened under her and she sank on her side. Her red cap had slipped down, and she picked it up with her trunk, broke its band in a reckless swing that resembled the wave of jovial farewell, gave one titanic hiccup, and fell asleep by the roadside.

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An hour later, Dr. Tibbitt was driving toward Pelion, with Miss Bunker by his side. His horse had been stopped at the toll-gate. He was driving with one hand. Perhaps he needed the other to show how they could have a summer-house in the garden that ran down to the river.

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But it was evening when Zenobia awoke to find her keeper sitting on her head. He jabbed a cotton-hook firmly and decisively into her ear, and led her homeward down the road lit by the golden sunset. That was the end of Zenobia's infidelity.

THE NINE CENT-GIRLS

MISS BESSIE VAUX, of Baltimore, paid a visit to her aunt, the wife of the Commandant at old Fort Starbuck, Montana. She had at her small feet all the garrison and some two dozen young ranch-owners, the flower of the younger sons of the best society of New York, Boston, and Philadelphia. Thirty-seven notches in the long handle of her parasol told the story of her three months' stay. The thirty-seventh was final. She accepted a measly Second-Lieutenant, and left all the bachelors for thirty miles around the Fort to mourn her and to curse the United States Army. This is the proem.

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Mr. John Winfield, proprietor of the Winfield Ranch, sat a-straddle a chair in front of the fire in his big living room, and tugged at his handsome black beard as he discussed the situation with his foreman, who was also his confidant, his best friend and his old college mate. Mr. Richard Cutter stood with his back to the fire, twirled a very blonde moustache and smoked cigarettes continually while he ministered to his suffering friend, who was sore wounded in his

vanity, having been notch No. 36 on Miss Vaux's parasol. Dick had been notch No. 1; but Dick was used to that sort of thing.

"By thunder," said Mr. Winfield, "I'm going to get married this year, if I have to marry a widow with six children. And I guess I'll have to. I've been ten years in this girlless wilderness, and I never did know any girls to speak of, at home. Now *you*, you always everlastingly knew girls. What's that place you lived at in New York State—where there were so many girls?"

"Tusculum," replied Mr. Cutter, in a tone of complacent reminiscence. "Nice old town, plastered so thick with mortgages that you can't grow flowers in the front yard. All the fellows strike for New York as soon as they begin to shave. The crop of girls remains, and they wither on the stem. Why, one Winter they had a humpbacked man for their sole society star in the male line. Nice girls, too. Old families. Pretty, lots of them. Good form, too, for provincials."

"Gad!" said Jack Winfield. "I'd like to live in Tusculum for a year or so."

"No, you wouldn't. It's powerful dull. But the girls were nice. Now, there were the Nine Cent-Girls."

"The Nine-cent Girls?"

"No, the Nine Cent-Girls. Catch the difference? They were the daughters of old Bailey, the civil engineer. Nine of 'em, ranging from

twenty-two, when I was there—that's ten years ago—down to—oh, I don't know—a kid in a pinafore. All looked just alike, barring age, and every one had the face of the Indian lady on the little red cent. Do you remember the Indian lady on the little red cent?"

"Hold on," suggested Jack, rising; "I've got one. I've had it ever since I came." He unlocked his desk, rummaged about in its depths, and produced a specimen of the neatest and most artistic coin that the United States Government has ever struck.

"That's it," said Dick, holding the coppery disk in his palm. "It would do for a picture of any one of 'em—only the Bailey girls didn't wear feathers in their hair. But there they were, nine of 'em, nice girls, every way, and the whole lot named out of the classics. Old Bailey was strong on the classics. His great-grandfather named Tusculum, and Bailey's own name was M. Cicero Bailey. So he called all his girls by heathen names, and had a row with the parson every christening. Let me see—there was Euphrosyne, and Clelia, and Lydia, and Flora and Aurora—those were the twins—I was sweet on one of the twins—and Una—and, oh, I can't remember them all. But they were mighty nice girls."

"Probably all married by this time," Jack groaned. "Let me look at that cent." He held it in the light of the fire, and gazed thoughtfully upon it.

"Not a one," Dick assured him. "I met a chap from Tusculum last time I was in Butte City, and I asked him. He said there'd been only one wedding in Tusculum in three years, and then the local paper had a wire into the church and got out extras."

"What sort of girls were they?" Winfield asked, still regarding the coin.

"Just about like that, for looks. Let me see it again." Dick examined the cent critically, and slipped it into his pocket, in an absent-minded way. "Just about like that. First rate girls. Old man was as poor as a church mouse; but you would never have known it, the way that house was run. Bright girls, too—at least, my twin was. I've forgotten which twin it was; but she was too bright for me."

"And how old did you say they were? How old was the youngest?"

"Oh, I don't know," replied Dick, with a bachelor's vagueness on the question of a child's age, "five—six—seven, may be. Ten years ago, you know."

"Just coming in to grass," observed Mr. Winfield, meditatively.

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Two months after the evening on which this conversation took place, Mr. Richard Cutter walked up one of the quietest and most eminently respectable of the streets of Tusculum.

Mr. Cutter was nervous. He was, for the

second time, making up his mind to attempt a difficult and delicate task. He had made up his mind to it, or had had it made up for him; but now he felt himself obliged to go over the whole process in his memory, in order to assure himself that the mind was really made up.

The suggestion had come from Winfield. He remembered with what a dazed incomprehension he had heard his chum's proposition to induce Mr. Bailey and all his family to migrate to Montana and settle at Starbuck.

"We'll give the old man all the surveying he wants. And he can have Ashford's place on the big dam when Ashford goes East in August. Why, the finger of Providence is pointing Bailey straight for Starbuck."

With a clearer remembrance of Eastern conventionalities than Mr. Winfield, Dick Cutter had suggested various obstacles in the way of this apparently simple scheme. But Winfield would hear of no opposition, and he joined with him eight other young ranchmen, who entered into the idea with wild Western enthusiasm and an Arcadian simplicity that could see no chance of failure. These energetic youths subscribed a generous fund to defray the expenses of Mr. Cutter as a missionary to Tusculum; and Mr. Cutter had found himself committed to the venture before he knew it.

Now, what had seemed quite feasible in Starbuck's wilds wore a different face in prim and proper Tusculum. It dawned on Mr. Cutter that

he was about to make a most radical and somewhat impudent proposition to a conservative old gentleman. The atmosphere of Tusculum weighed heavy on his spirits, which were light and careless enough in his adopted home in Montana.

Therefore Mr. Cutter found his voice very uncertain as he introduced himself to the young lady who opened, at his ring, the front door of one of the most respectable houses in that respectable street of Tusculum.

"Good morning," he said, wondering which one of the Nine Cent-Girls he saw before him; and then, noting a few threads of gray in her hair, he ventured:

"It's Miss—Miss Euphrosyne, isn't it? You don't remember me—Mr. Cutter, Dick Cutter? Used to live on Ovid Street. Can I see your father?"

"My father?" repeated Miss Euphrosyne, looking a little frightened.

"Yes—I just want—"

"Why, Mr. Cutter—I do remember you now—didn't you know that Papa died nine years ago—the year after you left Tusculum?"

Dick Cutter leaned against the door-jamb and stared speechlessly at Euphrosyne. He noted vaguely that she looked much the same as when he had last seen her, except that she looked tired and just a shade sad. When he was able to think, he said that he begged her pardon. Then she smiled, faintly.

"We couldn't expect you to know," she said, simply. "Won't you come in?"

"N-N-No," stuttered Dick. "I-I-I'll call later—this evening, if you don't mind. Ah—ah—*good* day." And he fled to his hotel, to pull himself together, leaving Miss Euphrosyne smiling.

He sat alone in his room all the afternoon, pondering over the shipwreck of his scheme. What should he tell the boys? What would the boys say? Why had he not thought to write before he came? Why on earth had Bailey taken it into his head to die?

After supper, he resolved to call as he had promised. Mrs. Bailey, he knew, had died a year after the appearance of her ninth daughter. But, he thought, with reviving hope, there might be a male head to the family—an uncle, perhaps.

The door was opened by Clytie, the youngest of the nine. She ushered him at once into a bright little parlor, hung around with dainty things in artistic needlework and decorative painting. A big lamp glowed on a centre-table, and around it sat seven of the sisters, each one engaged in some sort of work, sewing, embroidering or designing. Nearest the lamp sat Euphrosyne, reading Macaulay aloud. She stopped as he entered, and welcomed him in a half-timid but wholly friendly fashion.

Dick sat down, very much embarrassed, in spite of the greeting. It was many years since

he had talked to nine ladies at once. And, in truth, a much less embarrassed man might have found himself more or less troubled to carry on a conversation with nine young women who looked exactly like each other, except for the delicate distinctions of age which a masculine stranger might well be afraid to note. Dick looked from one to the other of the placid classic faces, and could not help having an uneasy idea that each new girl that he addressed was only the last one who had slipped around the table and made herself look a year or two older or younger.

But after a while the pleasant, genial, social atmosphere of the room, sweet with a delicate, winning virginity, thawed out his awkward reserve, and Dick began to talk of the West and Western life until the nine pairs of blue eyes, stretched to their widest, fixed upon him as a common focus. It was eleven when he left, with many apologies for his long call. He found the night and the street uncommonly dark, empty and depressing.

"Just the outfit!" he observed to himself. "And old Bailey dead and the whole scheme busted."

For he had learned that the Nine Cent-Girls had not a relative in the world. Under these circumstances, it was clearly his duty to take the morning train for the West. And yet, the next evening, he presented himself, shamefaced and apologetic, at the Bailey's door.

He thought that he wanted to make some sort of explanation to Miss Euphrosyne. But what explanation could he make? There was no earthly reason for his appearance in Tusculum. He talked of the West until eleven o'clock, and then he took a hesitating leave.

The next day he made a weak pretense of casually passing by when he knew that Miss Euphrosyne was working in the garden; but he found it no easier to explain across the front fence. The explanation never would have been made if it had not been for Miss Euphrosyne. A curious nervousness had come over her, too, and suddenly she spoke out.

"Mr. Cutter—excuse me—but what has brought you here? I mean is it anything that concerns us—or—or—Papa's affairs! I thought everything was settled—I had hoped—"

There was nothing for it now but to tell the whole story, and Dick told it.

"I suppose you'll think we're a pack of barbarians," he said, when he had come to the end, "and, of course, it's all impracticable *now*."

But Miss Euphrosyne did not seem to be offended—only thoughtful.

"Can you call here to-morrow at this time, Mr. Cutter?" she inquired.

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Miss Euphrosyne blushed faintly when Dick presented himself to hear judgment pronounced.

"I suppose you will think it strange," she said, "but if your plan is feasible, I should wish to carry it out. Frankly, I *do* want to see the girls married. Clelia and Lydia and I are past the time when women think about such things—but Clytie—and the rest. And, you know, I can remember how Papa and Mama lived together, and sometimes it seems cruelly hard that those dear girls should lose all that happiness—I'm sure it's the best happiness in the world. And it can never be, *here*. Now, if I could get occupation—you know that I'm teaching school, I suppose—and if the rest of the girls could keep up their work for the New York people—why—don't you know, if I didn't tell—if I put it on business grounds, you know—I think they would feel that it was best, after all, to leave Tusculum . . ."

Her voice was choked when she recommenced.

"It seems awful for me to talk to you in this cold-blooded way about such a thing; but—what *can* we do, Mr. Cutter? You don't know how poor we are. There's nothing for my little Clytie to do but to be a dressmaker—and you know what *that* means, in Tusculum. Oh, *do* you think I could teach school out in Star—Star—Starbuckle?"

Miss Euphrosyne was crying.

Dick's census of possible pupils in the neighborhood of Starbuck satisfied Miss Euphrosyne. It troubled Dick's conscience a bit, as he walked back to the hotel. "But they'll all be married

off before she finds it out, so I guess it's all right," he reflected.

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The next week Dick went to New York. This was in pursuance of an idea which he had confided to Winfield, on the eve of his forth-setting.

"Why," Winfield had said to him, "you are clean left out of this deal, aren't you?"

"Of course I am," said Dick. "How am I going to marry a poor girl on a hundred dollars a month?"

"I might set you up for yourself—" began his employer.

"Hold on!" broke in Dick Cutter, with emphasis. "You wouldn't talk that way if you'd ever been hungry yourself. I 'most starved that last time I tried for myself; and I'd starve next trip, sure. You've been a good friend to me, Jack Winfield. Don't you make a damn fool of yourself and spoil it all."

"But," he added, after a pause, "I *have* a little racket of my own. There's a widow in New York who smiled on yours affectionately once, ere she wed Mammon. I'm going just to see if she feels inclined to divide the late lamented's pile with a blonde husband."

So, the business at Tusculum being determined, and preparations for the hegira well under way, Dick went to look after his own speculation.

He reached New York on Tuesday morning, and called on the lady of his hopes that after-

noon. She was out. He wrote to her in the evening, asking when he might see her. On Thursday her wedding-cards came to his hotel by special messenger. He cursed his luck, and went cheerfully about attending to a commission which Miss Euphrosyne, after much urging, had given him, trembling at her own audacity. The size of it had somewhat staggered him. She asked him to take an order to a certain large dry-goods house for nine traveling ulsters (ladies', medium weight, measurements enclosed), for which he was to select the materials.

"Men have so much taste," said Miss Euphrosyne. "Papa *always* knew when we were well dressed."

Dick had to wait while another customer was served. He stared at her in humble admiration. It was a British actress, recently imported.

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When Mr. Richard Cutter sat on the platform of Tusculum station and saw his nine charges approach, ready for the long trip to the Far West, it struck him that the pinky-dun ulsters with the six-inch-square checks of pale red and blue did not look, on these nine virgins, as they looked on the British actress. It struck him, moreover, that the nine "fore-and-aft," or "deer-stalker" caps which he had thrown in as Friendship's Offering only served to more accentuate a costume already accentuated.

But it was too late for retreat. The Baileys

had burned their bridges behind them. The old house was sold. Their lot was cast in Montana. He had his misgivings; but he handed them gallantly into the train—it was not a vestibule express, for economy forbade—and they began their journey.

He had an uneasy feeling that they were noticed; that the nine ladies in the ulsters of one pattern—and of the pattern of his choosing—were attracting more attention than any ladies not thus uniformed would have attracted; but he was not seriously disturbed until a loquacious countryman sat down beside him.

“Runnin’ a lady baseball nine, be ye?” he inquired. “I seen one, wunst, down to Ne’ York. They can’t play ball not to speak of; but it’s kinder fun lookin’ at ’em. Couldn’t ye inter-dooce me to the pitcher?”

Mr. Cutter made a dignified reply, and withdrew to the smoking-car. There a fat and affable stranger tapped him on the back and talked in his ear from the seat behind.

“It don’t pay, young man,” he said. “I’ve handled ’em. Female minstrels sounds first rate; but they don’t give the show that catches the people. You’ve gotter have reel talent kinder mixed in with them if you want to draw.”

“Them ladies in your comp’ny, where do they show?” inquired the Conductor, as he examined the ten tickets that Dick presented.

“What do you mean?” asked the irritated pioneer.

"If they show in Cleveland, I'd like to go, first rate," the Conductor explained.

"Those ladies," Dick thundered, at the end of his patience, "are not actresses!"

"Hmf! What be they then?" asked the Conductor.

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They had arrived at Buffalo. They had gone to the Niagara Hotel, and had been told that there were no rooms for them; and to the Tift House, where there were no rooms; and to the Genesee, where every room was occupied. Finally they had found quarters in a very queer hotel, where the clerk, as he dealt out the keys, said:

"One for Lily, and one for Daisy and one for Rosie—here, Boss, sort out the flower-bed yourself," as he handed over the bunch.

Dick was taking a drink in the dingy bar-room, and trying to forget the queer looks that had been cast at his innocent caravan all the day, when the solitary hall-boy brought a message summoning him to Miss Euphrosyne's room. He went, with his moral tail between his mental legs.

"Mr. Cutter," said Miss Euphrosyne, firmly, "we have made a mistake."

"It looks that way," replied Dick, feebly; "but may be it's only the—the ulsters."

"No," said Miss Euphrosyne. "The ulsters are a part of it; but the whole thing is wrong. Mr. Cutter; and I see it all now. I didn't realize what it meant. But my eyes have been opened.

Nine young unmarried women cannot go West with a young man—if you had heard what people were saying all around us in the cars—you don't know. We've got to give up the idea. Oh, but it was awful!"

Miss Euphrosyne, trembling, hid her face in her hands. Her tears trickled out through her thin fingers.

"And the old house is sold! *What* shall we do? *Where* shall we go?" she cried, forgetting Dick utterly, lost and helpless.

Dick was stalking up and down the room.

"It would be all right," he demanded, "if there was a married woman to lead the gang, and if—if—if we caught on to something new in the ulster line?"

"It might be different," Miss Euphrosyne admitted, with a sob. Speaking came hard to her. She was tired; well nigh worn out.

"*THEN*," said Dick, with tremendous emphasis, "what's the matter with my marrying one of you?"

"*Why*, Mr. Cutter!" Miss Euphrosyne cried, "I had no idea that you—you—ever—thought of—is it Clytie?"

"No," said Mr. Cutter, "it isn't Clytie."

"Is it—is it—" Miss Euphrosyne's eyes lit up with hope long since extinguished, "is it Aurora?"

"No!"

Dick Cutter could have been heard three rooms off.

"No!" he said, with all his lungs. "It ain't Clytie, nor it ain't Aurora, nor it ain't Flora, nor Melpomene nor Cybele nor Alveolar Aureole nor none of 'em. It's *YOU*—Y-O-U! I want to marry *you*, and what's more, I'm going to!"

"Oh! oh! oh! oh!" said poor Miss Euphrosyne, and hid her face in her hands. She had never thought to be happy, and now she was happy for one moment. That seemed quite enough for her modest soul. And yet more was to come.

For once in his life, Dick Cutter seized the right moment to do the right thing. One hour later, Miss Euphrosyne Bailey was Mrs. Richard Cutter. She did not know quite how it happened. Clytie told her she had been bullied into it. But oh! such sweet bullying!

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"No," said Mr. Richard Cutter one morning in September of the next year, to Mr. Jack Winfield and his wife (Miss Aurora Bailey that was), "I can't stop a minute. We're too busy up at the ranch. The Wife has just bought out Wilkinson; and I've got to round up all his stock. I'll see you next month, at Clytie's wedding. Queer, she should have gone off the last, ain't it? Euphrosyne and I are going down to Butte City Monday, to buy her a present. Know anybody who wants to pay six per cent. for a thousand?"

THE NICE PEOPLE

“**T**HEY certainly are nice people,” I assented to my wife’s observation, using the colloquial phrase with a consciousness that it was any thing but “nice” English, “and I’ll bet that their three children are better brought up than most of—”

“*Two* children,” corrected my wife.

“Three, he told me.”

“My dear, she said there were *two*.”

“He said three.”

“You’ve simply forgotten. I’m *sure* she told me they had only two—a boy and a girl.”

“Well, I didn’t enter into particulars.”

“No, dear, and you couldn’t have understood him. Two children.”

“All right,” I said; but I did not think it was all right. As a near-sighted man learns by enforced observation to recognize persons at a distance when the face is not visible to the normal eye, so the man with a bad memory learns, almost unconsciously, to listen carefully and report accurately. My memory is bad; but I had not had time to forget that Mr. Brewster Brede had told me that afternoon that he had three children, at present left in the care of his mother-in-law, while he and Mrs. Brede took their Summer vacation.

"Two children," repeated my wife; "and they are staying with his aunt Jenny."

"He told me with his mother-in-law," I put in. My wife looked at me with a serious expression. Men may not remember much of what they are told about children; but any man knows the difference between an aunt and a mother-in-law.

"But don't you think they're nice people?" asked my wife.

"Oh, certainly," I replied. "Only they seem to be a little mixed up about their children."

"That isn't a nice thing to say," returned my wife. I could not deny it.

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And yet, the next morning, when the Bredes came down and seated themselves opposite us at table, beaming and smiling in their natural, pleasant, well-bred fashion, I knew, to a social certainty, that they were "*nice*" people. He was a fine-looking fellow in his neat tennis-flannels, slim, graceful, twenty-eight or thirty years old, with a Frenchy pointed beard. She was "*nice*" in all her pretty clothes, and she herself was pretty with that type of prettiness which outwears most other types—the prettiness that lies in a rounded figure, a dusky skin, plump, rosy cheeks, white teeth and black eyes. She might have been twenty-five; you guessed that she was prettier than she was at twenty, and that she would be prettier still at forty.

And nice people were all we wanted to make

us happy in Mr. Jacobus's Summer boarding-house on top of Orange Mountain. For a week we had come down to breakfast each morning, wondering why we wasted the precious days of idleness with the company gathered around the Jacobus board. What joy of human companionship was to be had out of Mrs. Tabb and Miss Hoogencamp, the two middle-aged gossips from Scranton, Pa.—out of Mr. and Mrs. Biggle, an indurated head-bookkeeper and his prim and censorious wife—out of old Major Halkit, a retired business man, who, having once sold a few shares on commission, wrote for circulars of every stock company that was started, and tried to induce every one to invest who would listen to him? We looked around at those dull faces, the truthful indices of mean and barren minds, and decided that we would leave that morning. Then we ate Mrs. Jacobus's biscuit, light as Aurora's cloudlets, drank her honest coffee, inhaled the perfume of the late azaleas with which she decked her table, and decided to postpone our departure one more day. And then we wandered out to take our morning glance at what we called "our view;" and it seemed to us as if Tabb and Hoogencamp and Halkit and the Biggleses could not drive us away in a year.

I was not surprised when, after breakfast, my wife invited the Bredes to walk with us to "our view." The Hoogencamp - Biggle - Tabb - Halkit contingent never stirred off Jacobus's verandah; but we both felt that the Bredes would not pro-

fane that sacred scene. We strolled slowly across the fields, passed through the little belt of woods, and as I heard Mrs. Brede's little cry of startled rapture, I motioned to Brede to look up.

"By Jove!" he cried, "heavenly!"

We looked off from the brow of the mountain over fifteen miles of billowing green, to where, far across a far stretch of pale blue lay a dim purple line that we knew was Staten Island. Towns and villages lay before us and under us; there were ridges and hills, uplands and lowlands, woods and plains, all massed and mingled in that great silent sea of sunlit green. For silent it was to us, standing in the silence of a high place—silent with a Sunday stillness that made us listen, without taking thought, for the sound of bells coming up from the spires that rose above the tree-tops—the tree-tops that lay as far beneath us as the light clouds were above us that dropped great shadows upon our heads and faint specks of shade upon the broad sweep of land at the mountain's foot.

"And so that is *your* view?" asked Mrs. Brede, after a moment; "you are very generous to make it ours, too."

Then we lay down on the grass, and Brede began to talk, in a gentle voice, as if he felt the influence of the place. He had paddled a canoe, in his earlier days, he said, and he knew every river and creek in that vast stretch of landscape. He found his landmarks, and pointed out to us where the Passaic and the Hackensack flowed,

invisible to us, hidden behind great ridges that in our sight were but combings of the green waves upon which we looked down. And yet, on the further side of those broad ridges and rises were scores of villages—a little world of country life, lying unseen under our eyes.

“A good deal like looking at humanity,” he said; “there is such a thing as getting so far above our fellowmen that we see only one side of them.”

Ah, how much better was this sort of talk than the chatter and gossip of the Tabb and the Hoo-gencamp—than the Major’s dissertations upon his everlasting circulars! My wife and I exchanged glances.

“Now, when I went up the Matterhorn,” Mr. Brede began.

“Why, dear,” interrupted his wife, “I didn’t know you ever went up the Matterhorn.”

“It—it was five years ago,” said Mr. Brede, hurriedly. “I—I didn’t tell you—when I was on the other side, you know—it was rather dangerous—well, as I was saying—it looked—oh, it didn’t look at all like this.”

A cloud floated overhead, throwing its great shadow over the field where we lay. The shadow passed over the mountain’s brow and reappeared far below, a rapidly decreasing blot, flying eastward over the golden green. My wife and I exchanged glances once more.

Somehow, the shadow lingered over us all. As we went home, the Bredes went side by side along

the narrow path, and my wife and I walked together.

"*Should you think,*" she asked me, "that a man would climb the Matterhorn the very first year he was married?"

"I don't know, my dear," I answered, evasively; "this isn't the first year I have been married, not by a good many, and I wouldn't climb it—for a farm."

"You know what I mean," she said.

I did.

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When we reached the boarding-house, Mr. Jacobus took me aside.

"You know," he began his discourse, "my wife she used to live in N' York!"

I didn't know, but I said "Yes."

"She says the numbers on the streets runs criss-cross-like. Thirty-four's on one side o' the street an' thirty-five on t'other. How's that?"

"That is the invariable rule, I believe."

"Then—I say—these here new folk that you 'n' your wife seem so mighty taken up with—d'ye know anything about 'em?"

"I know nothing about the character of your boarders, Mr. Jacobus," I replied, conscious of some irritability. "If I choose to associate with any of them—"

"Jess so—jess so!" broke in Jacobus. "I hain't nothin' to say ag'inst yer sosherbil'ty. But do ye *know* them?"

"Why, certainly not," I replied.

"Well—that was all I wuz askin' ye. Ye see, when *he* come here to take the rooms—you wasn't here then—he told my wife that he lived at number thirty-four in his street. An' yistiddy *she* told her that they lived at number thirty-five. He said he lived in an apartment-house. Now there can't be no apartment-house on two sides of the same street, kin they?"

"What street was it?" I inquired, wearily.

"Hunderd 'n' twenty-first street."

"May be," I replied, still more wearily.

"That's Harlem. Nobody knows what people will do in Harlem."

I went up to my wife's room.

"Don't you think it's queer?" she asked me.

"I think I'll have a talk with that young man to-night," I said, "and see if he can give some account of himself."

"But, my dear," my wife said, gravely, "*she* doesn't know whether they've had the measles or not."

"Why, Great Scott!" I exclaimed, "they must have had them when they were children."

"Please don't be stupid," said my wife. "I meant *their* children."

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After dinner that night—or rather, after supper, for we had dinner in the middle of the day at Jacobus's—I walked down the long verandah to ask Brede, who was placidly smoking at the

other end, to accompany me on a twilight stroll. Half way down I met Major Halkit.

"That friend of yours," he said, indicating the unconscious figure at the further end of the house, "seems to be a queer sort of a Dick. He told me that he was out of business, and just looking round for a chance to invest his capital. And I've been telling him what an everlasting big show he had to take stock in the Capitoline Trust Company—starts next month—four million capital—I told you all about it. 'Oh, well,' he says, 'let's wait and think about it.' 'Wait!' says I, 'the Capitoline Trust Company won't wait for *you*, my boy. This is letting you in on the ground floor,' says I, 'and it's now or never.' 'Oh, let it wait,' says he. I don't know what's in-*to* the man."

"I don't know how well he knows his own business, Major," I said as I started again for Brede's end of the verandah. But I was troubled none the less. The Major could not have influenced the sale of one share of stock in the Capitoline Company. But that stock was a great investment; a rare chance for a purchaser with a few thousand dollars. Perhaps it was no more remarkable that Brede should not invest than that I should not—and yet, it seemed to add one circumstance more to the other suspicious circumstances.

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When I went upstairs that evening, I found

my wife putting her hair to bed—I don't know how I can better describe an operation familiar to every married man. I waited until the last tress was coiled up, and then I spoke:

“I've talked with Brede,” I said, “and I didn't have to catechize him. He seemed to feel that some sort of explanation was looked for, and he was very outspoken. You were right about the children—that is, I must have misunderstood him. There are only two. But the Matterhorn episode was simple enough. He didn't realize how dangerous it was until he had got so far into it that he couldn't back out; and he didn't tell her, because he'd left her here, you see, and under the circumstances—”

“Left her here!” cried my wife. “I've been sitting with her the whole afternoon, sewing, and she told me that he left her at Geneva, and came back and took her to Basle, and the baby was born there—now I'm sure, dear, because I asked her.”

“Perhaps I was mistaken when I thought he said she was on this side of the water,” I suggested, with bitter, biting irony.

“You poor dear, did I abuse you?” said my wife. “But, do you know, Mrs. Tabb said that *she* didn't know how many lumps of sugar he took in his coffee. Now that seems queer, doesn't it.”

It did. It was a small thing. But it looked queer. Very queer.

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The next morning, it was clear that war was declared against the Bredes. They came down to breakfast somewhat late, and, as soon as they arrived, the Biggleses swooped up the last fragments that remained on their plates, and made a stately march out of the dining-room. Then Miss Hoogencamp arose and departed, leaving a whole fish-ball on her plate. Even as Atalanta might have dropped an apple behind her to tempt her pursuer to check his speed, so Miss Hoogencamp left that fish-ball behind her, and between her maiden self and Contamination.

We had finished our breakfast, my wife and I, before the Bredes appeared. We talked it over, and agreed that we were glad that we had not been obliged to take sides upon such insufficient testimony.

After breakfast, it was the custom of the male half of the Jacobus household to go around the corner of the building and smoke their pipes and cigars where they would not annoy the ladies. We sat under a trellis covered with a grape-vine that had borne no grapes in the memory of man. This vine, however, bore leaves, and these, on that pleasant Summer morning, shielded from us two persons who were in earnest conversation in the straggling, half-dead flower-garden at the side of the house.

"I don't want," we heard Mr. Jacobus say, "to enter in no man's *pry-vacy*; but I do want to know who it may be, like, that I hev in my house. Now what I ask of *you*, and I don't

want you to take it as in no ways *personal*, is—hev you your merridge-license with you?”

“No,” we heard the voice of Mr. Brede reply. “Have you yours?”

I think it was a chance shot; but it told all the same. The Major (he was a widower) and Mr. Biggle and I looked at each other; and Mr. Jacobus, on the other side of the grape-trellis, looked at—I don’t know what—and was as silent as we were.

Where is *your* marriage-license, married reader? Do you know? Four men, not including Mr. Brede, stood or sate on one side or the other of that grape-trellis, and not one of them knew where his marriage-license was. Each of us had had one—the Major had had three. But where were they? Where is *yours*? Tucked in your best-man’s pocket; deposited in his desk—or washed to a pulp in his white waistcoat (if white waistcoats be the fashion of the hour), washed out of existence—can you tell where it is? Can you—unless you are one of those people who frame that interesting document and hang it upon their drawing-room walls?

Mr. Brede’s voice arose, after an awful stillness of what seemed like five minutes, and was, probably, thirty seconds:

“Mr. Jacobus, will you make out your bill at once, and let me pay it? I shall leave by the six o’clock train. And will you also send the wagon for my trunks?”

"I hain't said I wanted to hev ye leave—" began Mr. Jacobus; but Brede cut him short.

"Bring me your bill."

"But," remonstrated Jacobus, "ef ye ain't—"

"Bring me your bill!" said Mr. Brede.

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My wife and I went out for our morning's walk. But it seemed to us, when we looked at "our view," as if we could only see those invisible villages of which Brede had told us—that other side of the ridges and rises of which we catch no glimpse from lofty hills or from the heights of human self-esteem. We meant to stay out until the Bredes had taken their departure; but we returned just in time to see Pete, the Jacobus darkey, the blacker of boots, the brusher of coats, the general handy-man of the house, loading the Brede trunks on the Jacobus wagon.

And, as we stepped upon the verandah, down came Mrs. Brede, leaning on Mr. Brede's arm, as though she were ill; and it was clear that she had been crying. There were heavy rings about her pretty black eyes.

My wife took a step toward her.

"Look at that dress, dear," she whispered; "she never thought anything like this was going to happen when she put *that* on."

It was a pretty, delicate, dainty dress, a graceful, narrow-striped affair. Her hat was trimmed with a narrow-striped silk of the same colors—

maroon and white—and in her hand she held a parasol that matched her dress.

“She’s had a new dress on twice a day,” said my wife; “but that’s the prettiest yet. Oh, somehow—I’m *awfully* sorry they’re going!”

But going they were. They moved toward the steps. Mrs. Brede looked toward my wife, and my wife moved toward Mrs. Brede. But the ostracised woman, as though she felt the deep humiliation of her position, turned sharply away, and opened her parasol to shield her eyes from the sun. A shower of rice—a half-pound shower of rice—fell down over her pretty hat and her pretty dress, and fell in a spattering circle on the floor, outlining her skirts—and there it lay in a broad, uneven band, bright in the morning sun.

Mrs. Brede was in my wife’s arms, sobbing as if her young heart would break.

“Oh, you poor, dear, silly children!” my wife cried, as Mrs. Brede sobbed on her shoulder. “why *didn’t* you tell us?”

“W-W-W-We didn’t want to be t-t-taken for a b-b-b-b-bridal couple,” sobbed Mrs. Brede; “and we d-d-didn’t *dream* what awful lies we’d have to tell, and all the aw-aw-ful mixed-up-ness of it. Oh, dear, dear, dear!”

.

“Pete!” commanded Mr. Jacobus, “put back them trunks. These folks stays here’s long’s they wants ter. Mr. Brede—” he held out a

large, hard hand—"I'd orter've known better," he said. And my last doubt of Mr. Brede vanished as he shook that grimy hand in manly fashion.

The two women were walking off toward "our view," each with an arm about the other's waist—touched by a sudden sisterhood of sympathy.

"Gentlemen," said Mr. Brede, addressing Jacobus, Biggle, the Major and me, "there is a hostelry down the street where they sell honest New Jersey beer. I recognize the obligations of the situation."

We five men filed down the street. The two women went toward the pleasant slope where the sunlight gilded the forehead of the great hill. On Mr. Jacobus's verandah lay a spattered circle of shining grains of rice. Two of Mr. Jacobus's pigeons flew down and picked up the shining grains, making grateful noises far down in their throats.

MR. COPERNICUS AND THE PROLETARIAT

THE old publishing house of T. Copernicus & Son was just recovering from the rush of holiday business—a rush of perhaps a dozen purchasers. Christmas shoppers rarely sought out the dingy building just around the corner from Astor Place, and T. C. & Son had done no great business since young T. C., the “Son,” died, fifteen years before. The house lived on two or three valuable copyrights; and old Mr. Copernicus kept it alive just for occupation’s sake, now that Tom was dead. But he liked to maintain the assumption that his queer old business, with its publication of half-a-dozen scientific or theological works per annum, was the same flourishing concern that it had been in his prime. That it did not flourish was nothing to him. He was rich, thanks to himself; his wife was rich, thanks to her aunt; his daughter was rich, thanks to her grandmother. So he played at business, and every Christmas-time he bought a lot of fancy stationery and gift-books that nobody called for, and hired a couple of extra porters for whom the head-porter did his best to find some work. Then, the week after New Year’s, he would discharge his holiday hands,

and give each of them a dollar or two apiece out of his own pocket.

"Barney," he said to the old porter, "you don't need those two extra men any longer?"

"'Deed an' we do not, sorr!" said Barney; "th' wan o' thim wint off av himself the mornin', an' t'other do be readin' books the whole day long."

"Send him to me," Mr. Copernicus ordered, and Barney yelled unceremoniously, "Mike!"

The figure of a large and somewhat stout youth, who might have been eighteen or twenty-eight years old, appeared, rising from the sub-cellar. His hair was black, his face was clean-shaven, and although he held in his hand the evidence of his guilt, a book kept partly open with his forefinger, he had an expression of imperturbable calm, and placid, ox-like fixity of purpose. He wore a long, seedy, black frock-coat, buttoned up to the neck-band of his collarless shirt.

"How's this?" inquired Mr. Copernicus. "I'm told that you spend your time reading my books."

The young man slowly opened his mouth and answered in a deliberate drawl, agreeably diversified by a peculiar stutter.

"I haven't been reading *your* b-b-books, sir; I've been reading my own. All I had to do was to hand up boxes of fuf-fuf-fancy stationery, and—"

"I see," interposed Mr. Copernicus, hurriedly,

"there hasn't been any very great call for fancy stationery this year."

"And when there wasn't any c-c-call for it, I read. I ain't going to be a pip-pip-porter all my life. Would *you?*"

"Why, of course, my boy," said Mr. Copernicus, "if you are reading to improve your mind, in your leisure time—let's see your book."

The young man handed him a tattered duodecimo.

"Why, it's Virgil!" exclaimed his employer. "You can't read this."

"Some of it I kik-kik-can," returned the employee, "and some of it I kik-kik-can't."

Mr. Copernicus sought out "*Arma virumque*" and "*Tityre, tu patulæ*," and one or two other passages he was sure of, and the studious young porter read them in the artless accent which the English attribute to the ancient Romans, and translated them with sufficient accuracy.

"Where did you learn to read Latin?"

"I p-p-picked it up in odd hours."

"What else have you studied?"

"A little Gig-Gig-Greek."

"Anything else?"

"Some algebra and some Fif-Fif-French."

"Where do you come from?"

"From Baltimore," drawled the prodigy, utterly unmoved by his employer's manifest astonishment. "I was janitor of a school there, and the principal lent me his bib-bib-books."

"What is your name?"

"M-M-Michael Quinlan."

"And what was your father's business?"

"He was a bib-bib-bricklayer," the young man replied calmly, adding, reflectively, "when he wasn't did-did-drunk."

"Bless my old soul!" said Mr. Copernicus to himself, "this is most extraordinary! I'll see you again, young man. Barney!" he called to the head-porter, "this young man will remain with us for the present."

A couple of days later, Mr. Copernicus sent for Michael Quinlan, and invited him to call at the Copernicus residence on Washington Square, that evening.

"I want to have Professor Barcalow talk with you," he explained.

At the hour appointed, Mr. M. Quinlan presented himself at the basement door of the old house, and was promptly translated to the library, where Professor Barcalow, once President of Clear Creek University, Indiana, rubbed his bald head and examined the young man at length.

Quinlan underwent an hour's ordeal without the shadow of discomposure.

He drawled and stuttered with a placid face, whether his answers were right or wrong. At the end of the hour, the Professor gave his verdict.

"Our young friend," he said, "has certainly done wonders for himself in the way of self-tuition. He is *almost* able—mind, I say *almost*

—to pass a good Freshman examination. Of course, he is not thorough. There is just the same difference, Mr. Copernicus, between the tuition you do for yourself and the tuition that you receive from a competent teacher as there is between the carpentering you do for yourself and the carpentering a regular carpenter does for you. I can see the marks of self-tuition all over this young man's conversation. He has never met a competent instructor in his life. But he has done very well for himself—wonderfully well. He is entitled to great credit. Try to remember, Quinlan, what I told you about the use of the ablative absolute.”

Quinlan said he would, and made his exit by the basement door.

“If he works hard,” remarked the Professor, “he will be able to enter Clear Creek by June, and work his way through.”

“And as it happens,” said Mr. Copernicus, “I’m going to lose my night-watchman next week, and I think I’ll put Quinlan in. And then I’ve been thinking—there are all poor Tom’s books that he had when he went to Columbia. I’ll let the boy come here and borrow them, and I can keep an eye on him and see how he’s getting along.”

“H’m! yes, of course,” the Professor assented hesitatingly, dubious of Mr. Copernicus’s classics.

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“Well, Barney,” Mr. Copernicus hailed his

head-porter a month or two later, "how does our new night-watchman do?"

"Faith, I've seen worse than him," said Barney. "He's a willing lad."

Barney's heart had been won. He came down to the store each morning and found that Quinlan had saved him the trouble of taking off the long sheets of cotton cloth that protected the books on the counters from the dust.

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Every week thereafter, Quinlan presented himself at the basement door, shabby, but no longer collarless, was admitted to the library, by way of the back-stairs, and received from Mrs. Copernicus the books that Mr. Copernicus had set aside for him. But one day Mr. Copernicus forgot the books, and Mrs. Copernicus asked the young man into the parlor to explain to him how it had happened. When she had explained, being a kindly soul, she made a little further conversation, and asked Quinlan some questions about his studies. Greek was Greek indeed to her; but when he spoke of French, she felt as though she had a sort of second-hand acquaintance with the language.

"Floretta," she said to her daughter, "talk to Mr. Quinlan in French, and find out how much he knows."

Floretta blushed. She was a wren-like little thing, with soft brown hair, rather pretty, and yet the sort of girl whom men never notice. To

address this male stranger was an agony to her. But she knew that her French had been bought at a fashionable boarding-school, and bought for show, and her mother had a right to demand its exhibition. She asked M. Quinlan how he portrayed himself, and M. Quinlan, with no more expression on his face than a Chinese idol, but with a fluency checked only by his drawl and his stutter, poured forth what sounded to Mrs. Copernicus like a small oration.

"What did he say then, Floretta?" she demanded.

"He said how grateful he was to Papa for giving him such a chance, and how he wants to be a teacher when he knows enough. And, oh, Mama, he speaks *ever* so much better than *I* do."

"Where did you learn to speak so well?" inquired Mrs. Copernicus, incredulously.

"I lived for some years in a French house, Ma'am. At least, the lady of the house was French, and she never spoke anything else."

Beneficence is quick to develop into an insidious habit. When Mr. Copernicus heard this new thing of his prodigy and protégé, a new idea came to him.

"Old Haverhill, down at the office, speaks French like a native. I'll let him feel Quinlan's teeth, and if he is as good as you say he is, he'd better come once a week and talk French to Floretta for an hour. You can sit in the room. She ought to keep up her French."

And every Wednesday, from four to five, Mr.

Quinlan and Miss Floretta conversed, Floretta blushing ever, Quinlan retaining his idol-like stolidity. Sometimes the dull monotony of his drawl, broken only by his regular and rhythmic stutter, lulled Mrs. Copernicus into a brief nap over her book or her fancy work.

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Spring had come. The trees had brought out their pale and gauzy green veils, the beds of tulips and Alpine daisies made glad spots in the parks, and Quinlan, at his employer's suggestion, had purchased a ready-made Spring suit, in which he looked so presentable that Mr. Copernicus was half-minded to ask him to dinner.

For Mrs. Copernicus had said something to Mr. Copernicus that had set him to thinking of many things. The Chinese idol had abated no jot of his stolidity, and yet—perhaps—he had found a worshiper. Floretta began blushing of Wednesdays, a full hour before the lesson.

What was to come of it? On the face of it, it seemed impossible. A Quinlan and a Copernicus! And yet—great-grandfather Copernicus, who founded the family in America—was not he a carpenter? And did not his descendants point with pride to his self-made solidity? And here was native worth; high ambition; achievement that promised more. And Floretta was twenty-four, and had never had an offer. "What," inquired Mr. Copernicus of himself, "is my duty toward the proletariat?"

One thing was certain. If the question was not settled in the negative at once, Quinlan must be educated. So, instead of inviting Quinlan to dinner, he invited Mr. Joseph Mitts, the traveling agent of the Hopkinsonian Higher Education Association, who, by a rare chance, was in town.

Cynical folk said that the Hopkinsonian Association existed only to sell certain text-books and curious forms of stationery which were necessary to the Hopkinsonian system. But no such idea had ever entered the head of Mr. Mitts. He roamed about the land, introducing the System wherever he could, and a brisk business agent followed him and sold the Hopkinsonian Blackboards and the Hopkinsonian Ink and the Hopkinsonian Teachers' Self-Examination Blanks, on commission.

As they smoked their cigars in the Library after dinner, Mr. Copernicus told Mr. Mitts about Quinlan. Mr. Mitts was interested. He knew a Professor at a fresh-water college who would put Quinlan through his studies during the vacation.

"Well, that's settled," Mr. Copernicus said, and he beamed with satisfaction. "I knew you'd help me out, Mitts. Only it's so hard ever to get a sight of you—you are always traveling about."

"We don't often meet," Mr. Mitts assented. "And it is curious that this visit should have been the means of giving me sight of a man in whom I want to interest *you*. His name is

Chester—Dudley Winthrop Chester. He is the son of my old clergyman, and he has given his parents a deal of trouble. I don't know that Dud ever was vicious or dissolute. But he was the most confirmed idler and spendthrift I ever knew. He couldn't even get through college, and he never would do a stroke of work. He made his father pay his debts half a dozen times, and when that was stopped, he drifted away, and his family quite lost sight of him. I met him in Baltimore last year, and lent him money to come to New York. He said he was going to work. And just as I came in your front door, I saw him going out of your basement door with a package under his arm, so I infer he is employed by one of your trades-people—your grocer, perhaps.”

“Just as you came in? Why—a large, dark-haired young man?”

“Yes; clean-shaven.”

“Why, that was Quinlan!”

“No,” said Mr. Mitts, with the smile of superior knowledge. “It was Chester, and if I'm not mistaken, he was kissing the cook.”

“Then you *are* mistaken!” cried Mr. Copernicus; “my cook is as black as the ace of spades. There isn't a white servant in the house.”

“Why, that's so!” Mr. Mitts was staggered for the moment. “But—wait a minute—does your man Quinlan speak with a drawl, and just one stutter to the sentence?”

"I think he does," replied his host; "but—"

"Dudley Chester!" said Mr. Mitts.

"But, my dear Mitts, where did he get the Latin and Greek?"

"He had to learn *something* at Yale."

"And the French?"

"His mother was a French Canadian. That's where he gets his French—and his laziness."

Mr. Copernicus made one last struggle.

"But he has been most industrious and faithful in my employ."

"What is he?"

"My—my night-watchman."

"Mr. Copernicus," inquired Mr. Mitts, "have you a watchman's clock in your building?"

"No, sir," said Mr. Copernicus, indignantly. "I have none of those degrading new-fangled machines. I prefer to trust my employees."

"Then Dudley Chester is asleep in your store at this minute."

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A soft, moist breeze, with something of the sea in it, blew gently in at an open window of the second floor of the business establishment of T. Copernicus & Son. Near the window a gas-jet flickered. Under the gas-jet, on, or rather in, a bed ingeniously constructed of the heaped-up covering-cloths from the long counters, lay Mr. Michael Quinlan, half-supported on his left elbow. In his other hand he held, half-open, a yellow-covered French novel. Between his lips was a cigarette. A faint shade of something like amuse-

ment lent expression to his placid features as he listened to Mr. Copernicus puffing his way up the stairs, followed by Mr. Mitts and Barney. The hands on the clock pointed to eleven. Mr. Quinlan's attire was appropriate to the hour. He wore only a frayed cotton night-shirt. His other clothes were carelessly disposed about his couch.

He waited calmly until his visitors had appeared before him, and then he greeted them with a gracious wave of his hand—an easy gesture that seemed to dismiss Quinlan and announce Chester.

“Gentlemen,” he drawled, “you’ll excuse my not gig-gig-getting up to welcome you. Ah, Joseph! I saw you this evening, and I supposed the j-j-jig was up.”

Mr. Copernicus was purple and speechless for the better part of a minute. Then he demanded, in a husky whisper:

“Who are you?”

Mr. Chester, with nothing of the Quinlan left about him, waved his hand once more.

“Mr. Joseph Mitts is a gentleman of irre-pip-pip-proachable veracity,” he said. “I can kik-kik-confidently confirm any statements he has made about me.”

“And why—” Mr. Copernicus had found his voice—“why have you humbugged me in this iniquitous—infamous way?”

The late Quinlan gazed at him with blank surprise.

"My dear sir, did-did-don't you see? If I'd told you who I was, you'd have thought I was a did-did-damn fool not to know more than I did. Whereas, don't you see? you thought I was a did-did-devil of a fellow."

"Get up and dress yourself and get out of here!" said his employer.

"The jig, then," inquired Mr. Dudley Chester, slowly rising, "is did-did-definitely up? No more Fif-Fif-French lessons? No? Well," he continued, as he leisurely pulled on his trousers, "that's the kik-kik-cussèd inconsistency. The j-j-jig is up for the gentleman; but when you thought I was a did-did-damn Mick, I was right in the bib-bib-bosom of the blooming family."

"Here are your week's wages," said Mr. Copernicus, trembling with rage. "Now, get out!"

"Not exactly," responded the unperturbed sinner; "a ticket to Chicago!"

"I'm afraid you had best yield," whispered Mr. Mitts. "Your family, you know. It wouldn't do to have this get out."

Mr. Copernicus had a minute of purple rage. Then he handed the money to Mr. Mitts.

"Put him on the train," he said. "There's one at twelve."

"We can make it if we hurry," said the obliging Mr. Mitts. "Where's your lodging-house, Chester?"

Chester opened his eyes inquiringly. "Why, this is all I've got," he said; "what's the mim-mim-matter with this?"

"But your—your luggage?" inquired Mr. Mitts.

Mr. Chester waved a much-worn tooth-brush in the air.

"Man wants but lil-lil-little here below," he remarked.

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"You see," explained Mr. Dudley Winthrop Chester, formerly Quinlan, as he stepped out into the night air with Mr. Mitts, "the scheme is bib-bib-busted here, but I've got confidence in it. It's good—it'll gig-gig-go. Chicago's the pip-pip-place for me. I suppose if you flash up 'amo, amas' to a Chicago man, he thinks you're Elihu Burritt, the learned bib-bib-blacksmith."

"Aren't you tired of this life of false pretences?" asked Mr. Mitts, sternly.

"You can bib-bib-bet I am," responded Chester, frankly; "I haven't said a cuss-word in six months. Did-did-did-damn—damn—damn—damn!" he vociferated into the calm air of night, by way of relieving his pent-up feelings.

"How long is it, Dudley," pursued the patient Mitts, "since your parents heard from you?"

"Two years, I gig-gig-guess," said Chester. "By Jove!" he added, as his eye fell on the blue sign of a telegraph office, "did-did-damn if I don't telegraph them right now."

Mr. Mitts was deeply gratified. "That's a good idea," he said.

"Lend me a kik-kik-quarter," said Dudley Chester.

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At midnight sharp, Mr. Mitts saw his charge ascend the rear platform of the Chicago train just as it moved out of the gloomy Jersey City station of the Pennsylvania Railroad.

A young woman of slight figure, with a veil about her face, emerged from the interior of the car and threw her arms around the neck of Mr. Chester, late Quinlan.

"I thought I wasn't mistaken," said Mr. Mitts to himself.

The next week he received an envelope containing a scrap roughly torn out of a daily paper. It read as follows:

MARRIAGE

SCHOFF.—At the
of the Rev. Dr. Krotel,
BISCHOFF, daughter of
off, to THEODORE BREUSING, of Osnabrueck,
many.

CHESTER—COPERNICUS.—At the rectory of the
Church of St. James the Greater, by the Rev. Dr.
Wilson Wilson, D. D., FLORETTA, daughter of
Thomas Copernicus, of New York, to DUDLEY
WINTHROP CHESTER, of Baltimore, Md. No cards.

Marriage extra char London
ad, without either the
Re tel

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And yet, within six months, Mr. Mitts received cards. They bade him to a reception given by Mr. and Mrs. Chester at the house of Mr. Thomas Copernicus.

"I couldn't have done that," said Mitts to himself.

HECTOR

IT was such a quiet old home, so comfortably covered with wistaria from basement to chimney-tops, and it stood on the corner of two such quiet, old-fashioned streets on the East Side of New York that you would never have imagined that it held six of the most agitated and perturbed women in the great city. But the three Miss Pellicoes, their maid, their waitress and their cook, could not have been more troubled in their feminine minds had they been six exceptionally attractive Sabines with the Roman soldiery in full cry.

For twenty years—ever since the death of old Mr. Pellicoe—these six women had lived in mortal fear of the marauding man, and the Man had come at last. That very evening, at a quarter past eight o'clock, a creature who called himself a book-agent had rung the front door bell. Honora, the waitress, had opened the door a couple of inches, inquired the stranger's business, learned it, told him to depart, tried to close the door, and discovered that the man had inserted his toe in the opening. She had closed the door violently, and the man had emitted a single oath of deep and sincere profanity. He had then kicked the door and departed, with a marked limp.

At least this was the story as Honora first related it. But as she stood before the assembled household and recounted it for the seventh time, it had assumed proportions that left no room for the charitable hypothesis that an innocent vender of literature had been the hapless victim of his own carelessness or clumsiness.

“And whin he had the half of his big ugly body in the crack o’ th’ dure,” she said, in excited tones and with fine dramatic action, “and him yellin’ an’ swearin’ and cussin’ iv’ry holy name he could lay his black tongue to, and me six years cook in a convent, and I t’rew th’ whole weight o’ me on th’ dure, an’—”

“That will do, Honora,” said Miss Pellicoe, who was the head of the household. She perceived that the combat was deepening too rapidly. “You may go. We will decide what is to be done.”

And Miss Pellicoe had decided what was to be done.

“Sisters,” she said to her two juniors, “we must keep a dog.”

“A dog!” cried Miss Angela, the youngest; “oh, how nice!”

“I do not think it is nice at all,” said Miss Pellicoe, somewhat sternly, “nor would you, Angela, if you had any conception of what it really meant. I do not propose to keep a lap-dog, or a King Charles spaniel, but a *dog*—a mastiff, or a bloodhound, or some animal of that

nature, such as would spring at the throat of an invader, and bear him to the ground!"

"Oh, dear!" gasped Miss Angela. "I should be afraid of him!"

"You do not understand as yet, Angela," Miss Pellicoe explained, knitting her brows. "My intention is to procure the animal as a—in fact—a puppy, and thus enable him to grow up and to regard us with affection, and be willing to hold himself at all times in readiness to afford us the protection we desire. It is clearly impossible to have a man in the house. I have decided upon a mastiff."

When Miss Pellicoe decided upon a thing, Miss Angela Pellicoe and her other sister promptly acquiesced. On this occasion they did not, even in their inmost hearts, question the wisdom of the decision of the head of the house. A man, they knew, was not to be thought of. For twenty years the Pellicoe house had been a bower of virginity. The only men who ever entered it were the old family doctor, the older family lawyer, and annually, on New Year's Day, in accordance with an obsolete custom, Major Kitsedge, their father's old partner, once junior of the firm of Pellicoe & Kitsedge. Not even the butcher or the baker or the candlestick-maker forced an entrance to that innocent dovecote. They handed in their wares through a wicket-gate in the back yard and were sent about their business by the chaste Honora.

The next morning, having awakened to find

themselves and the silver still safe, Miss Pellicoe and Miss Angela set out for a dog store which they had seen advertised in the papers. It was in an unpleasantly low and ill-bred part of the town, and when the two ladies reached it, they paused outside the door, and listened, with lengthened faces, to the combined clamor and smell that emanated from its open door.

“This,” said Miss Pellicoe, after a brief deliberation, “is not a place for *us*. If we are to procure a dog, he must be procured in some other way. It need not entail a loss of self-respect.

“I have it!” she added with a sudden inspiration. “I will write to Hector.”

Hector was the sole male representative of the Pellicoe family. He was a second cousin of the Misses Pellicoe. He lived out West—his address varying from year to year. Once in a long while Miss Pellicoe wrote to him, just to keep herself in communication with the Man of the family. It made her feel more secure, in view of possible emergencies. She had not seen Hector since he was nineteen. He was perhaps the last person of any positive virility who had had the freedom of the Pellicoe household. He had used that freedom mainly in making attempts to kiss Honora, who was then in her buxom prime, and in decorating the family portraits with cork moustaches and whiskers. Miss Pellicoe clung to the Man of the family as an abstraction; but she was always glad that he lived in the West. Addressing him in his capacity of Man of the family, she wrote

to him and asked him to supply her with a young mastiff, and to send her bill therefor. She explained the situation to him, and made him understand that the dog must be of a character to be regarded as a male relative.

Hector responded at once. He would send a mastiff pup within a week. The pup's pedigree was, unfortunately, lost, but the breed was high. Fifty dollars would cover the cost and expenses of transportation. The pup was six months old.

For ten days the Pellicoe household was in a fever of expectation. Miss Pellicoe called in a carpenter, and, chaperoned by the entire household, held an interview with him, and directed him how to construct a dog-house in the back-yard—a dog-house with one door about six inches square, to admit the occupant in his innocent pup-hood, and with another door about four feet in height to emit him, when, in the pride of his mature masculinity, he should rush forth upon the burglar and the book-agent. The carpenter remarked that he “never seen no such a dorg as that;” but Miss Pellicoe thought him at once ignorant and ungrammatical, and paid no heed to him.

In conclave assembled, the Misses Pellicoe decided to name the dog Hector. Besides the consideration of the claims of gratitude and family affection, they remembered that Hector was a classical hero.

The ten days came to an end when, just at dusk of a dull January day, two stalwart expressmen,

with much open grumbling and smothered cursing, deposited a huge packing-case in the vestibule of the Pellicoe house, and departed, slamming the doors behind them. From this box proceeded such yelps and howls that the entire household rushed affrighted to peer through the slats that gridironed the top. Within was a mighty black beast, as high as a table, that flopped itself wildly about, clawed at the sides of the box, and swung in every direction a tail as large as a policeman's night-club.

It was Hector. There was no mistake about it, for Mr. Hector Pellicoe's card was nailed to a slat. It was Hector, the six-months-old pup, for whose diminutive proportions the small door in the dog-house had been devised; Hector, for whom a saucer of lukewarm milk was even then waiting by the kitchen range.

"Oh, Sister!" cried Miss Angela, "we *never* can get him out! You'll have to send for a *man*!"

"I certainly shall not send for a *man* at this hour of the evening," said Miss Pellicoe, white, but firm; "and I shall not leave the poor creature imprisoned during the night." Here Hector yawped madly.

"I shall take him out," exclaimed Miss Pellicoe, "*myself*!"

They hung upon her neck, and entreated her not to risk her life; but Miss Pellicoe had made up her mind. The three maids shoved the box into the butler's pantry, shrieking with terror every time that Hector leaped at the slats, and at last,

with the two younger Pellicoes holding one door a foot open, and the three maids holding the other door an inch open, Miss Pellicoe seized the household hatchet, and began her awful task. One slat! Miss Pellicoe was white but firm. Two slats! Miss Pellicoe was whiter and firmer. Three slats!—and a vast black body leaped high in the air. With five simultaneous shrieks, the two doors were slammed to, and Miss Pellicoe and Hector were left together in the butler's pantry.

The courage of the younger Pellicoes asserted itself after a moment, and they flung open the pantry door. Miss Pellicoe, looking as though she needed aromatic vinegar, leaned against the wall. Hector had his fore-paws on her shoulders, and was licking her face in exuberant affection.

“Sisters,” gasped Miss Pellicoe, “will you kindly remove him? I should like to faint.”

But Hector had already released her to dash at Miss Angela, who frightened him by going into such hysterics that Miss Pellicoe was obliged to deny herself the luxury of a faint. Then he found the maids, and, after driving them before him like chaff for five minutes, succeeded in convincing Honora of the affectionate purpose of his demonstrations, and accepted her invitation to the kitchen, where he emptied the saucer of milk in three laps.

“I think, Honora,” suggested Miss Pellicoe, who had resumed command, “that you might, perhaps, give him a slice or two of last night's leg

of mutton. Perhaps he needs something more sustaining."

Honora produced the mutton-leg. It was clearly what Hector wanted. He took it from her without ceremony, bore it under the sink and ate all of it except about six inches of the bone, which he took to bed with him.

The next day, feeling the need of masculine advice, Miss Pellicoe resolved to address herself to the policeman on the beat, and she astonished him with the following question:

"Sir," she said, in true Johnsonian style, "what height should a mastiff dog attain at the age of six months?"

The policeman stared at her in utter astonishment.

"They do be all sizes, Mum," he replied, blankly, "like a piece of cheese."

"My relative in the West," explained Miss Pellicoe, "has sent me a dog, and I am given to understand that his age is six months. As he is phenomenally large, I have thought it best to seek for information. Has my relative been imposed upon?"

"It's har-r-rd to tell, Mum," replied the policeman, dubiously. Then his countenance brightened. "Does his feet fit him?" he inquired.

"What—what do you mean?" asked Miss Pellicoe, shrinking back a little.

"Is his feet like blackin'-boxes on th' ind of his legs?"

"They are certainly very large."

"Thin 'tis a pup. You see, Mum, with a pup, 'tis this way. The feet starts first, an' the pup grows up to 'em, like. Av they match him, he's grown. Av he has arctics on, he's a pup."

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Hector's growth in the next six months dissipated all doubts as to his puphood. He became a four-legged Colossus, martial toward cats, aggressive toward the tradesmen at the wicket-gate, impartially affectionate toward all the household, and voracious beyond all imagining. But he might have eaten the gentle ladies out of house and home, and they would never have dreamed of protesting. The house had found a Head—even a Head above Miss Pellicoe.

The deposed monarch gloried in her subjection. She said "Hector likes this," or "Hector likes that," with the tone of submissive deference in which you may hear a good wife say, "Mr. Smith *will not* eat cold boiled mutton," or "Mr. Smith is very particular about his shirt-bosoms."

As for Miss Angela, she never looked at Hector, gamboling about the back-yard in all his superabundance of strength and vitality, without feeling a half-agreeable nervous shock, and a flutter of the heart. He stood for her as the type of that vast outside world of puissant manhood of which she had known but two specimens—her father and Cousin Hector. Perhaps, in the old days, if Cousin Hector had not been so engrossed in frivolity and making of practical jokes, he might have learned

of something to his advantage. But he never did.

.

For the first time in her life, Miss Angela found herself left to watch the house through the horrors of the Fourth of July. This had always been Miss Pellicoe's duty; but this year Miss Pellicoe failed to come back from the quiet place in the Catskills, where no children were admitted, and where the Pellicoe family, two at a time, spent the Summer in the society of other old maids and of aged widows.

"I feel that you are safe with Hector," she wrote.

Alack and alack for Miss Pellicoe's faith in Hector! The first fire-cracker filled him with excitement, and before the noises of the day had fairly begun, he was careering around the yard, barking in uncontrollable frenzy. At twelve o'clock, when the butcher-boy came with the chops for luncheon, Hector bounded through the open wicket, right into the arms of a dog-catcher. Miss Angela wrung her hands as she gazed from her window and saw the Head of the House cast into the cage with a dozen curs of the street and driven rapidly off.

In her lorn anguish she sought the functionary who was known in the house as "Miss Pellicoe's policeman."

"Be aisy, Miss," he said. "Av the dog is worth five dollars, say, to yez, I have a friend will get him out for th' accommodation."

“Oh, take it, take it!” cried Miss Angela, trembling and weeping.

.

After six hours of anxious waiting, Miss Angela received Hector at the front door, from a boy who turned and fled as soon as his mission was accomplished. Hector was extremely glad to be at home, and his health seemed to be unimpaired; but to Miss Angela's delicate fancy, contact with the vulgar of his kind had left a vague aroma of degradation about him. With her own hands she washed him in tepid water and sprinkled him with eau de cologne. And even then she could not help feeling that to some extent the bloom had been brushed from the peach.

.

Hector was ill—very ill. The family conclave assembled every night and discussed the situation with knit brows and tearful eyes. They could not decide whether the cause of his malady was the unwholesomeness of the Summer air in the city, or whether it was simply over-feeding. He was certainly shockingly fat, and much indisposed to exertion. He had lost all his activity; all his animal spirits. He spent most of the time in his house. Even his good-nature was going. He had actually snapped at Honora. They had tried to make up their minds to reduce his rations; but their hearts had failed them. They had hoped that the cool air of September would help him;

but September was well nigh half gone; and Hector grew worse and worse.

"Sisters," said Miss Pellicoe, at last, "we shall have to send for a Veterinary!" She spoke as though she had just decided to send for an executioner. And even as the words left her lips there came from Hector such a wail of anguish that Miss Pellicoe's face turned a ghastly white.

"He is going mad!" she cried.

There was no sleep in the Pellicoe household that night, although Hector wailed no more. At the break of day, Miss Pellicoe led five other white-faced women into the back yard.

Hector's head lay on the sill of his door. He seemed too weak to rise, but he thrashed his tail pleasantly against the walls, and appeared amiable and even cheerful. The six advanced.

Miss Pellicoe knelt down and put her hand in to pet him. Then a strange expression came over her face.

"Sister," she said, "I *think*—a cat has got in and bitten him."

She closed her hand on something soft, lifted it out and laid it on the ground. It was small, it was black, it was dumpy. It moved a round head in an uncertain, inquiring way, and tried to open its tightly-closed eyes. Then it squeaked.

Thrice more did Miss Pellicoe thrust her hand into the house. Thrice again did she bring out an object exactly similar.

"Wee-e-e-e!" squeaked the four objects. Hector thrashed her tail about and blinked joyfully,

all unconscious of the utter wreck of her masculinity, looking as though it were the most natural thing in the world for her to have a litter of pups—as, indeed, it was.

Honora broke the awful silence—Miss Angela was sobbing so softly you could scarcely hear her.

“Be thim Hectors?” Honora inquired.

“Honora!” said Miss Pellicoe, rising, “never utter that name in my presence again.”

“An fwat shall I call the dog?”

“Call *it*”—and Miss Pellicoe made a pause of impressive severity, “call *it*—Andromache.”

A SISTERLY SCHEME

A WAY up in the very heart of Maine there is a mighty lake among the mountains. It is reached after a journey of many hours from the place where you "go in." That is the phrase of the country, and when you have once "gone in," you know why it is not correct to say that you have gone *through* the woods, or, simply, *to* your destination. You find that you have plunged into a new world—a world that has nothing in common with the world that you live in; a world of wild, solemn, desolate grandeur, a world of space and silence; a world that oppresses your soul—and charms you irresistibly. And after you have once "come out" of that world, there will be times, to the day of your death, when you will be homesick for it, and will long with a childlike longing to go back to it.

Up in this wild region you will find a fashionable Summer hotel, with electric bells and seven-course dinners, and "guests" who dress three times a day. It is perched on a little flat point, shut off from the rest of the mainland by a huge rocky cliff. It is an impertinence in that majestic wilderness, and Leather-Stocking would doubtless have had a hankering to burn such an affront to Nature; but it is a

good hotel, and people go to it and breathe the generous air of the great woods.

On the beach near this hotel, where the canoes were drawn up in line, there stood one Summer morning a curly-haired, fair young man—not so very young, either—whose cheeks were uncomfortably red as he looked first at his own canoe, high and dry, loaded with rods and landing-net and luncheon-basket, and then at another canoe, fast disappearing down the lake, wherein sat a young man and a young woman.

“Dropped again, Mr. Morpeth?”

The young man looked up and saw a saucy face laughing at him. A girl was sitting on the string-piece of the dock. It was the face of a girl between childhood and womanhood. By the face and the figure, it was a woman grown. By the dress, you would have judged it a girl.

And you would have been confirmed in the latter opinion by the fact that the young person was doing something unpardonable for a young lady, but not inexcusable in the case of a youthful tomboy. She had taken off her canvas shoe, and was shaking some small stones out of it. There was a tiny hole in her black stocking, and a glimpse of her pink toe was visible. The girl was sunburnt, but the toe was prettily pink.

“Your sister,” replied the young man with dignity, “was to have gone fishing with me; but she remembered at the last moment that she had a prior engagement with Mr. Brown.”

“She hadn’t,” said the girl. “I heard them

make it up last evening, after you went upstairs."

The young man clean forgot himself.

"She's the most heartless coquette in the world!" he cried, and clinched his hands.

"She is all that," said the young person on the string-piece of the dock, "and more, too. And yet, I suppose, you want her all the same?"

"I'm afraid I do," said the young man, miserably.

"Well," said the girl, putting her shoe on again, and beginning to tie it up, "I'll tell you what it is, Mr. Morpeth. You've been hanging around Pauline for a year, and you are the only one of the men she keeps on a string who hasn't snubbed me. Now, if you want me to, I'll give you a lift."

"A—a—*what?*"

"A lift. You're wasting your time. Pauline has no use for devotion. It's a drug in the market with her—has been for five seasons. There's only one way to get her worked up. Two fellows tried it, and they nearly got there; but they weren't game enough to stay to the bitter end. I think you're game, and I'll tell you. You've got to make her jealous."

"Make her jealous of me?"

"No!" said his friend, with infinite scorn; "make her jealous of the other girl. *Oh!* but you men are stupid!"

The young man pondered a moment.

"Well, Flossy," he began, and then he became

conscious of a sudden change in the atmosphere, and perceived that the young lady was regarding him with a look that might have chilled his soul.

"Miss Flossy—Miss Belton—" he hastily corrected himself. Winter promptly changed to Summer in Miss Flossy Belton's expressive face.

"Your scheme," he went on, "is a good one. Only—it involves the discovery of another girl."

"Yes," assented Miss Flossy, cheerfully.

"Well," said the young man, "doesn't it strike you that if I were to develop a sudden admiration for any one of these other young ladies whose charms I have hitherto neglected, it would come tardy off—lack artistic verisimilitude, so to speak?"

"Rather," was Miss Flossy's prompt and frank response; "especially as there isn't one of them fit to flirt with."

"Well, then, where am I to discover the girl?"

Miss Flossy untied and retied her shoe. Then she said, calmly:

"What's the matter with—" a hardly perceptible hesitation—"me?"

"With *you*?" Mr. Morpeth was startled out of his manners.

"Yes."

Mr. Morpeth simply stared.

"Perhaps," suggested Miss Flossy, "I'm not good-looking enough?"

"You are good-looking enough," replied Mr. Morpeth, recovering himself, "for *anything*—"

and he threw a convincing emphasis into the last word as he took what was probably his first real inspection of his adored one's junior—"but—aren't you a trifle—young?"

"How old do you suppose I am?"

"I know. Your sister told me. You are sixteen."

"Sixteen!" repeated Miss Flossy, with an infinite and uncontrollable scorn, "yes, and I'm the kind of sixteen that stays sixteen till your elder sister's married. I was eighteen years old on the third of last December—unless they began to double on me before I was old enough to know the difference—it would be just like Mama to play it on me in some such way," she concluded, reflectively.

"Eighteen years old!" said the young man. "The deuce!" Do not think that he was an ill-bred young man. He was merely astonished, and he had much more astonishment ahead of him. He mused for a moment.

"Well," he said, "what's your plan of campaign? I am to—to discover you."

"Yes," said Miss Flossy, calmly, "and to flirt with me like fun."

"And may I ask what attitude you are to take when you are—discovered?"

"Certainly," replied the imperturbable Flossy. "I am going to dangle you."

"To—to dangle me?"

"As a conquest, don't you know. Let you hang around and laugh at you."

"Oh, indeed!"

"There, don't be wounded in your masculine pride. You might as well face the situation. You don't think that Pauline's in love with you, do you?"

"No!" groaned the young man.

"But you've got lots of money. Mr. Brown has got lots more. You're eager. Brown is coy. That's the reason that Brown is in the boat and you are on the cold, cold shore, talking to Little Sister. Now if Little Sister jumps at you, why, she's simply taking Big Sister's leavings; it's all in the family, any way, and there's no jealousy, and Pauline can devote her whole mind to Brown. There, *don't* look so limp. You men are simply childish. Now, after you've asked me to marry you—"

"Oh, I'm to ask you to marry me?"

"Certainly. You needn't look frightened, now. I won't accept you. But then you are to go around like a wet cat, and mope, and hang on worse than ever. Then Big Sister will see that she can't afford to take that sort of thing from Little Sister, and then—there's your chance."

"Oh, there's my chance, is it?" said Mr. Morpeth. He seemed to have fallen into the habit of repetition.

"There's your *only* chance," said Miss Flossy, with decision.

Mr. Morpeth meditated. He looked at the lake, where there was no longer sign or sound of the canoe, and he looked at Miss Flossy, who

sat calm, self-confident and careless, on the string-piece of the dock.

"I don't know how feasible—" he began.

"It's feasible," said Miss Flossy, with decision. "Of course, Pauline will write to Mama, and of course Mama will write and scold me. But she's got to stay in New York, and nurse Papa's gout; and the Miss Redingtons are all the chaperons we've got up here, and they don't amount to anything—so I don't care."

"But why," inquired the young man; and his tone suggested a complete abandonment to Miss Flossy's idea; "why should you take so much trouble for *me*?"

"Mr. Morpeth," said Miss Flossy, solemnly, "I'm two years behind the time-table, and I've got to make a strike for liberty, or die. And besides," she added, "if you are *nice*, it needn't be such an *awful* trouble."

Mr. Morpeth laughed.

"I'll try to make it as little of a bore as possible," he said, extending his hand. The girl did not take it.

"Don't make any mistake," she cautioned him, searching his face with her eyes; "this isn't to be any little-girl affair. Little Sister doesn't want any kind, elegant, supercilious encouragement from Big Sister's young man. It's got to be a *real* flirtation—devotion no end, and ten times as much as ever Pauline could get out of you—and you've got to keep your end 'way—'way—'way up!"

The young man smiled.

"I'll keep my end up," he said; "but are you certain that you can keep yours up?"

"Well, I think so," replied Miss Flossy. "Pauline will raise an awful row; but if she goes too far, I'll tell my age, *and hers, too.*"

Mr. Morpeth looked in Miss Flossy's calm face. Then he extended his hand once more.

"It's a bargain, so far as I'm concerned," he said.

This time a soft and small hand met his with a firm, friendly, honest pressure.

"And I'll refuse you," said Miss Flossy.

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Within two weeks, Mr. Morpeth found himself entangled in a flirtation such as he had never dreamed of. Miss Flossy's scheme had succeeded only too brilliantly. The whole hotel was talking about the outrageous behavior of "that little Belton girl" and Mr. Morpeth, who certainly ought to know better.

Mr. Morpeth had carried out his instructions. Before the week was out, he found himself giving the most lifelike imitation of an infatuated lover that ever delighted the old gossips of a Summer resort. And yet he had only done what Flossy told him to do.

He got his first lesson just about the time that Flossy, in the privacy of their apartments, informed her elder sister that if she, Flossy, found Mr. Morpeth's society agreeable, it was

nobody's concern but her own, and that she was prepared to make some interesting additions to the census statistics if any one thought differently.

The lesson opened his eyes.

"Do you know," she said, "that it wouldn't be a bit of a bad idea to telegraph to New York for some real nice candy and humbly present it for my acceptance? I *might* take it—if the bonbonnière was pretty enough."

He telegraphed to New York and received, in the course of four or five days, certain marvels of sweets in a miracle of an upholstered box. The next day he found her on the verandah, flinging the bonbons on the lawn for the children to scramble for.

"Awfully nice of you to send me these things," she said languidly, but loud enough for the men around her to hear—she had men around her already: she had been discovered—"but I never eat sweets, you know. Here, you little mite in the blue sash, don't you want this pretty box to put your doll's clothes in?"

And Maillard's finest bonbonnière went to a yellow-haired brat of three.

But this was the slightest and lightest of her caprices. She made him send for his dog-cart and his horses, all the way from New York, only that he might drive her over the ridiculous little mile-and-a-half of road that bounded the tiny peninsula. And she christened him "Muffets," a nickname presumably suggested by "Mor-

peth"; and she called him "Muffets" in the hearing of all the hotel people.

And did such conduct pass unchallenged? No. Pauline scolded, raged, raved. She wrote to Mama. Mama wrote back and reproved Flossy. But Mama could not leave Papa. His gout was worse. The Miss Redingtons must act. The Miss Redingtons merely wept, and nothing more. Pauline scolded; the flirtation went on; and the people at the big hotel enjoyed it immensely.

And there was more to come. Four weeks had passed. Mr. Morpeth was hardly on speaking terms with the elder Miss Belton; and with the younger Miss Belton he was on terms which the hotel gossips characterized as "simply scandalous." Brown glared at him when they met, and he glared at Brown. Brown was having a hard time. Miss Belton the elder was not pleasant of temper in those trying days.

"And now," said Miss Flossy to Mr. Morpeth, "it's time you proposed to me, Muffets."

They were sitting on the hotel verandah, in the evening darkness. No one was near them, except an old lady in a Shaker chair.

"There's Mrs. Melby. She's pretending to be asleep, but she isn't. She's just waiting for us. Now walk me up and down and ask me to marry you so that she can hear it. It'll be all over the hotel inside of half an hour. Pauline will just *rage*."

With this pleasant prospect before him, Mr. Morpeth marched Miss Flossy Belton up and

down the long verandah. He had passed Mrs. Melby three times before he was able to say, in a choking, husky, uncertain voice:

"Flossy—I—I—I *love* you!"

Flossy's voice was not choking nor uncertain. It rang out clear and silvery in a peal of laughter.

"Why, of course you do, Muffets, and I wish you didn't. That's what makes you so stupid half the time."

"But—" said Mr. Morpeth, vaguely; "but I—"

"But you're a silly boy," returned Miss Flossy; and she added in a swift aside: "*You haven't asked me to marry you!*"

"W-W-W-Will you be my wife?" stammered Mr. Morpeth.

"No!" said Miss Flossy, emphatically, "I will not. You are too utterly ridiculous. The idea of it! No, Muffets, you are charming in your present capacity; but you aren't to be considered seriously."

They strolled on into the gloom at the end of the great verandah.

"That's the first time," he said, with a feeling of having only the ghost of a breath left in his lungs, "that I ever asked a woman to marry me."

"I should think so," said Miss Flossy, "from the way you did it. And you were beautifully rejected, weren't you? Now—look at Mrs. Mel-

by, will you? She's scudding off to spread the news."

And before Mr. Morpeth went to bed, he was aware of the fact that every man and woman in the hotel knew that he had "proposed" to Flossy Belton, and had been "beautifully rejected."

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Two sulky men, one sulky woman, and one girl radiant with triumphant happiness started out in two canoes, reached certain fishing-grounds known only to the elect, and began to cast for trout. They had indifferent luck. Miss Belton and Mr. Brown caught a dozen trout; Miss Flossy Belton and Mr. Morpeth caught eighteen or nineteen, and the day was wearing to a close. Miss Flossy made the last cast of the day, just as her escort had taken the paddle. A big trout rose—just touched the fly—and disappeared.

"It's this wretched rod!" cried Miss Flossy; and she rapped it on the gunwale of the canoe so sharply that the beautiful split-bamboo broke sharp off in the middle of the second joint. Then she tumbled it overboard, reel and all.

"I was tired of that rod, anyway, Muffets," she said; "row me home, now; I've got to dress for dinner."

Miss Flossy's elder sister, in the other boat, saw and heard this exhibition of tyranny; and she was so much moved that she stamped her

small foot, and endangered the bottom of the canoe. She resolved that Mama should come back, whether Papa had the gout or not.

Mr. Morpeth, wearing a grave expression, was paddling Miss Flossy toward the hotel. He had said nothing whatever, and it was a noticeable silence that Miss Flossy finally broke.

"You've done pretty much everything that I wanted you to do, Muffets," she said; "but you haven't saved my life yet, and I'm going to give you a chance."

It is not difficult to overturn a canoe. One twist of Flossy's supple body did it, and before he knew just what had happened, Morpeth was swimming toward the shore, holding up Flossy Belton with one arm, and fighting for life in the icy water of a Maine lake.

The people were running down, bearing blankets and brandy, as he touched bottom in his last desperate struggle to keep the two of them above water. One yard further, and there would have been no strength left in him.

He struggled up on shore with her, and when he got breath enough, he burst out:

"Why did you do it? It was wicked! It was cruel!"

"There!" she said, as she reclined composedly in his arms, "that will do, Muffets. I don't want to be scolded."

A delegation came along, bringing blankets and brandy, and took her from him.

.

At five o'clock of that afternoon, Mr. Morpeth presented himself at the door of the parlor attached to the apartments of the Belton sisters. Miss Belton, senior, was just coming out of the room. She received his inquiry after her sister's health with a white face and a quivering lip.

"I should think, Mr. Morpeth," she began, "that you had gone far enough in playing with the feelings of a m-m-mere child, and that—oh! I have no words to express my *contempt* for you!"

And in a most unladylike rage Miss Pauline Belton swept down the hotel corridor.

She had left the door open behind her. Morpeth heard a voice, weak, but cheery, addressing him from the far end of the parlor.

"You've got her!" it said. "She's crazy mad. She'll make up to you to-night—see if she don't."

Mr. Morpeth looked up and down the long corridor. It was empty. He pushed the door open, and entered. Flossy was lying on the sofa, pale, but bright-eyed.

"You can get her," she whispered, as he knelt down beside her.

"Flossy," he said, "don't you know that that is all ended? Don't you know that I love you and you only? Don't you know that I haven't thought about any one else since—since—oh, Flossy, don't you—is it possible that you don't understand?"

Flossy stretched out two weak arms, and put them around Mr. Morpeth's neck.

"Why have I had you in training all Summer?" said she. "Did you think it was for Pauline?"

ZOZO

THROUGH a thickly falling snow, on the outskirts of one of New York's suburban towns (a hamlet of some two hundred thousand population), walked a man who had but one desire in the world ungratified. His name was Richard Brant, and he was a large, deep-chested, handsome man—a man's man; hardly a woman's man at all; and yet the sort of man that is likely to make a pretty serious matter of it if he loves a woman, or if a woman loves him.

Mr. Richard Brant came from the West, the Western-born child of Eastern-born parents. He made his fortune before he was thirty-five, and for five years he had been trying to find out what he wanted to do with that fortune. He was a man of few tastes, of no vices, and of a straight-forward, go-ahead spirit that set him apart from the people who make affectation the spice of life. He wanted only one thing in the world, and that one thing money would not buy for him. So he was often puzzled as to how he might best spend his money; and he often spent it foolishly. As he walked through the suburban streets of the suburban city, this sharp Winter's night, he was reflecting on the folly of spending

money on a fur coat. He was wearing the coat—a magnificent affair of bear-skin and sable.

“South of Canada,” he said to himself, “this sort of thing is vulgar and unnecessary. *I* don’t need it, any more than a cow needs a side-pocket. It’s too beastly hot for comfort at this moment. I’d carry it over my arm, only that I should feel how absurdly heavy it really is.”

Then he looked ahead through the thick snow, and, although he was a man of strong nerves, he started and stepped back like a woman who sees a cow.

“Great Cæsar’s ghost!” said he.

He was justified in calling thus upon the most respectable spook of antiquity. The sight he saw was strange enough in itself: seen in the squalid, common-place sub-suburban street, it was bewildering. There, ahead of him, walked Mephistopheles—Mephistopheles dressed in a red flannel suit, trimmed with yellow, all peaks and points; and on the head of Mephistopheles was an old, much worn, brown Derby hat.

Brant caught Mephisto by the shoulder and turned him around. He was a slight, undersized man of fifty, whose moustache and goatee, dyed an impossible black, served only to accentuate the meagre commonness of his small features.

“Who are you?” demanded Brant.

“Sh-h-h!” said the shivering figure, “lemme go! I’m Zozo!”

Brant stared at him in amazement. What

was it? A walking advertisement—for an automatic toy or a new tooth-powder?”

“It’s all right,” said the slim man, his teeth chattering, “lemme get along. I’m most freezing. I’m Zozo—the astrologer. Why—don’t you know—on Rapelyea Street?”

Brant dimly remembered that there was a Rapelyea Street, through which he sometimes passed on his way to the railroad station, and he had some faint memory of a gaudily painted shanty decked out with the signs of the zodiac in gilt *papier maché*.

“My orfice got afire this evening,” explained Zozo, “from the bakery next door. And I had to light out over the back fence. Them people in that neighborhood is kinder superstitious. They ain’t no idea of astrology. They don’t know it’s a Science. They think it’s some kind of magic. And if they’s to see me drove out by a common, ordinary fire, they’d think I was no sort of an astrologer. So I lit out quiet.”

His teeth chattered so that he made ten syllables out of “quiet.”

“They don’t understand the Science of it,” he continued, “and the fire got at my street clo’es before I knew it, and so I had to light out mighty quick. Now, jes’ lemme get home, will you? This here flannel ain’t no fur coat.”

Brant’s coat came off his shoulders in an instant.

“Put this on,” he said. “Confound you!—” as the man resisted—“*put it on!*”

The astrologer slipped into the coat with a gasp of relief.

"Cracky!" he cried, "but I was freezin'!"

"Do you live far from here?" Brant inquired.

"Just a bit up the road. I'm 'most home, now," replied Zozo, still chattering as to his teeth.

As they walked along the half-built street, Zozo told his tale. He had been in the astrology business for thirty years, and it had barely yielded him a living. Yet he had been able, by rigorous economy, to save up enough money to build himself a house—"elegant house, sir," he said; "'tain't what you may call *large*; but it's an elegant house. I got the design out of a book that cost a dollar, sir, a dollar. There ain't no use in trying to do things cheap when you're going to build a house."

But his joy in his house was counterbalanced by his grief for the loss of his "orifice." He had taken the ground-rent of the city lot, and had erected the "orifice" at his own cost. Three hundred and twenty-seven dollars he had spent on that modest structure. No, he had not insured it. And now the bakery had caught fire, and his "orifice" was burned to the ground, and his best suit of street-clothes with it—his only suit, as he owned after a second's hesitation.

In ten minutes' walk they arrived at Zozo's house. It was quite the sort of house that might have come out of a dollar book, with a

great deal of scroll-work about it, and with a tiny tower, adorned with fantastically carved shingles. As they stood on the porch—nothing would content Zozo but that his new friend should come in and warm himself—Mr. Brant looked at the name on the door-plate.

“Zozo’s only my name in the Science,” the astrologer explained. “My real name—my born name—is Simmons. But I took Zozo for my business name. ‘Z’s seem to kinder go with the astrology business, somehow—I don’t know why. There’s Zadkiel, and Zoroaster, and—oh, I don’t know—they’re ‘Z’s or ‘X’s, most of ‘em; and it goes with the populace. I don’t no more like humoring their superstition than you would; but a man’s got to live; and the world ain’t up to the Science yet. Oh, that’s you, Mommer, is it?” he concluded, as the door was opened by a bright, buxom, rather pretty woman. “Mother ain’t to bed yet, is she? Say, Mommer, the orfice is burnt down!”

“Oh, Popper!” cried the poor woman; “you don’t reely say!”

“True’s I live,” said the astrologer, “and my street-clo’es, too.”

“Oh, Popper!” his wife cried, “what’ll we do?”

“I don’t know, Mommer, I don’t know. We’ll have to think. Jes’ let this here gentleman in, though. I’d most ‘a’ froze if he hadn’t lent me the loan of his overcoat. My sakes!” he broke out, as he looked at the garment in the

light of the hall-lamp, "but that cost money. Mommer, this here's Mr.—I ain't caught your name, sir."

"Brant," said the owner of the name.

"Band. And a reel elegant gentleman he is, Mommer. I'd 'a' froze stiff in my science clo'es if 't hadn't been for this coat. My sakes!" he exclaimed, reverently, "never see the like! That'd keep a corpse warm. Shut the door, Mommer, an' take the gentleman into the dining-room. He must be right cold himself. Is Mother there?"

"Yes," said Zozo's wife, "and so's Mamie. You was so late we all got a kinder worried, and Mamie come right down in her nighty, just before you come in. 'Where's Popper?' sez she; 'ain't he came in yet to kiss me good night? 'Tain't mornin', is it?' sez she. *And* the orfice burned down! Oh, my, Popper! I thought our troubles was at an end. Come right in, Mr.—Mr.—I ain't rightly got your name; but thank you kindly for looking after Popper, and if you had an idee how easy he takes cold on his chist, you'd know how thankful I am. Come right into the dinin'-room. Mother, this is Mr. Band, and he lent Simmons the loan of his coat to come home with. Wa'n't it awful?"

"What's that?" croaked a very old woman in the corner of the dining-room. It was a small dining-room, with a small extension-table covered with a cheap red damask cloth.

"Simmons's orfice is burned up, and his best

suit with it," explained Mrs. Simmons. "Ain't it awful!"

"It's a judgement," said the old lady, solemnly. She was a depressing old lady. And yet she evidently was much revered in the family. A four-year-old child hung back in a corner, regarding her grandmother with awe. But when her father entered, she slipped up to his knee, and took his kisses silently, but with sparkling eyes.

"Only one we've got," said Zozo, as he sat down and took her on his knee. "Born under Mercury and Jupiter—if that don't mean that she'll be on top of the real-estate boom in this neighborhood, I ain't no astrologer. Yes, Ma," he went on, addressing the old woman, who gave no slightest sign of interest. "the office burned down, and I had to get home quick. Wouldn't 'a' done for them Rapelyea Street folks to see me, scuttin' off in my office clo'es."

He had shed Brant's huge overcoat, and his wife was passing her hand over his thin flannel suit.

"Law, Simmons!" she said. "you're all wet!"

"I'll dry all right in these flannels," said Zozo. "Don't you bother to get no other clo'es."

He had forgotten that he had told Brant that the suit in his office was his only suit. Or perhaps he wished to spare his wife the humiliation of such an admission.

"I'm dryin' off first-rate," he said cheerfully: "Mamie, Popper ain't wet where you're

settin', is he? No. Well, now, Mommer, you get out the whiskey and give Mr.—Mr. Band—a glass, with some hot water, and then he won't get no chill. We're all pro'hibitionists here," he said, addressing Brant, "but we b'lieve in spirits for medicinal use. Yes, Mother, you'd ought-er've seen that place burn. Why, the flames was on me before I know'd where I was, and I jist thought to myself, thinks I, if these here people see me a-runnin' away from a fire, I won't cast no horoscope in Rapelyea Street after *this*; and I tell *you*, the way I got outer the back window and over the back fence was a caution! There's your whiskey, sir; you'll excuse me if I don't take none myself. We ain't in the habit here."

Brant did not greatly wonder at their not being in the habit when he tasted the whiskey. It was bad enough to wean a toper on. But he sipped it, and made overtures to the baby. And after a while she showed an inclination to come and look at his wonderful watch, that struck the hour when you told it to. Before long she was sitting on his knee. Her father was telling the female members of the family about the fire, and she felt both sleepy and shut out. She played with Brant's watch for a while, and then fell asleep on his breast. He held her tenderly, and listened to the astrologer as he told his pitiful tale over and over again, trying to fix the first second when he had smelled smoke.

He was full of the excitement of the affair; too full of the consciousness of his own achieve-

ment to realize the extent of the disaster. But his wife suddenly broke down, crying out:

"Oh, Simmons! where'll you get three hundred dollars to build a new orfice?"

Brant spoke up, but very softly, lest he might wake the baby, who was sleeping with her head on his shoulder.

"I'll be happy to—to advance the money," he said.

Zozo looked at him almost sourly.

"I ain't got no security to give you. This is a Building Society house, and there's all the mortgage on it that it's worth. I couldn't do no better," he concluded, sullenly.

Brant had been poor enough himself to understand the quick suspicion of the poor. "Your note will do, Mr. Simmons," he said; "I think you will pay me back. I sha'n't worry about it."

But it was some time before the Simmons family could understand that a loan of the magnitude of three hundred dollars could be made so easily. When the glorious possibility did dawn upon them, nothing would do but that Mr. Brant should take another drink of whiskey. It was not for medicinal purposes this time; it was for pure conviviality; and Brant was expected, not being a prohibitionist, to revel vicariously for the whole family. He drank, wondering what he had at home to take the taste out of his mouth.

Then he handed the baby to her mother, and started to go. But Simmons suddenly and un-

expectedly turned into Zozo, and insisted on casting his benefactor's horoscope. His benefactor told him the day of his birth, and guessed at the hour. Zozo figured on a slate, drawing astronomical characters very neatly indeed, and at last began to read off the meaning of his stellar stenography, in a hushed, important voice.

He told Brant everything that had happened to him (only none of it *had* happened; but Brant did not say him nay). Then he told him various things that were to happen to him; and Zozo cheered up greatly when his impassive and sleepy guest sighed as he spoke of a blonde woman who was troubling his heart, and who would be his, some day. There was a blonde woman troubling Brant's heart; but there was small probability of her being his some day or any day. And then Zozo went on to talk about a dark woman who would disturb the course of true love; but only temporarily and as a side issue, so to speak.

"She ain't serious," he said. "She may make a muss; but she ain't reel serious."

"Good night!" said Brant.

"You don't b'lieve in the Science," said Zozo, in a voice of genuine regret. "But you jist see if it don't come true. Good night. Look out you don't trip over the scraper."

.

The blonde woman in Mr. Brant's case was Madame la Comtesse de Renette. No, she was

not a French woman: she was a loyal American. She was the daughter of an American millionaire; she had lived for many years in France, and her parents had married her, at the age of eighteen, to a title. The title was owned by a disagreeable and highly immoral old spendthrift, who had led her a wretched life for two weary years, and then had had the unusual courtesy and consideration to die. Then she took what he had left of her millions, went home to the town of her birth, bought a fine estate on its outskirts, and settled down to enjoy a life wherein she could awake each morning to feel that the days would never more bring her suffering and humiliation.

Then Mr. Richard Brant disturbed her peace of mind by falling in love with her, and what was worse, asking her to marry him. That, she said, she could not do. He was her best, her dearest friend; she admired and esteemed him more than any man in the world. If she ever *could* marry a man, she would marry him. But she never, never could. He must not ask her.

Of course, he did ask her. And he asked her more than once. And there matters stood, and there they seemed likely to stay.

But Richard Brant was a man who, when he wanted a thing, wanted it with his whole heart and his whole soul, and to the exclusion of every other idea from his mind. After eighteen months of waiting, he began to find the situation in-

tolerable. He had no heart in his business—which, for the matter of that, took care of itself—and he found it, as he said to himself, “a chore to exist.” And what with dwelling on the unattainable, and what with calling on the unattainable once or twice every week, he found that he was getting into a morbid state of mind that was the next thing to a mild mania.

“This has got to stop,” said Richard Brant. “I will put an end to it. I will wait till an even two years is up, and then I will go away somewhere where I *can’t* get back until—until I’ve got over it.”

Opportunity is never lacking to a man in this mood. Some scientific idiot was getting up an Antarctic expedition, to start in the coming June. Brant applied for a berth.

“That settles it,” he said.

Of course, it didn’t settle it. He moped as much as ever and found it just as hard as ever to occupy his mind. If it had not been for the astrologer, he would hardly have known what to do.

It amused him to interest himself in Zozo and his affairs. He watched the building of the new “orifice,” and discussed with Zozo the color of the paint and the style of the signs. Zozo tried to convert him to astrology, and that amused him. The little man’s earnest faith in this “science” was an edifying study. Then, when the “orifice” was completed, and Zozo be-

gan business again, he took great pleasure in sitting hid in Zozo's back room, listening to Zozo's clients, who were often as odd as Zozo himself. He had many clients now. Had he not miraculously vanished from a burning building, and come back unscathed?

.

But there are two sides to every friendship. Brant took an amused interest in Zozo. Zozo worshiped Brant as his preserver and benefactor. Zozo's affairs entertained Brant. Brant's affairs were a matter of absorbing concern to Zozo. Zozo would have died for Brant.

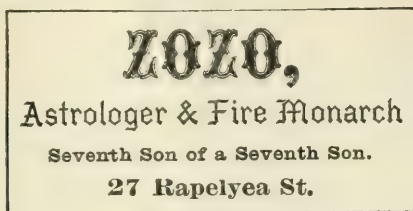
So it came about that Zozo found out all about the blonde lady in Brant's case. How? Well, one is not an astrologer for nothing. Brant's coachman and Mme. de Renette's maid were among Zozo's clients. No society gossip knew so much about the Brant-Renette affair as Zozo knew, inside of two months.

.

"It's perfectly ridiculous, Annette! I *can't* see the man!"

"Madame knows best," said Annette, wiping away a ready tear. "It is only that I love Madame. And it is not well to anger those who have the power of magic. If they can bring good luck, they can bring bad. And he is certainly a great magician. Fire cannot burn him."

Mme. de Renette toyed with a gorgeously-printed card that read:



“Well,” she said at last, “show him in, Annette. But it’s perfectly absurd!”

Zozo, in a very ready-made suit, with no earthly idea what to do with his hat, profuse of bows and painfully flustered, did not inspire awe.

“You wish to see me?” inquired Mme. de Renette, somewhat sternly.

“Madam,” began her visitor, in a tremulous voice, “I come with a message from the stars.”

“Very well,” said Mme. de Renette, “will you kindly deliver your message? I do not wish to detain you—from your stars.”

.
It was a flushed, but a self-complacent, beaming, happy Zozo who stopped Richard Brant on the street an hour later.

“If you please, Mr. Brant, sir,” he said; “I’d like a few minutes of your time.”

“Certainly,” said Mr. Brant, wondering if Zozo wanted to borrow any more money.

“You’ve been a great good friend to me, Mr.

Brant," Zozo began, "and I hope you b'lieve, sir, that me and Mommer and Ma Simmons and Mamie are jist as grateful as—well, as anything."

"Oh, that's all right, Simmons—"

"Yes, sir. Well, now you'll pardon me for seeming to interfere, like, in your business. But knowin' as I done how your affairs with the blonde lady was hangin' fire, so to speak—"

"The blonde lady!" broke in Brant.

"Madam dee Rennet," explained Zozo.

"The devil!" said Brant.

"Well, sir, knowin' that, as I done, and knowin' that there couldn't be nothin' *to* it—no lady would chuck you over her shoulder, Mr. Brant, sir—but only jist that her mind wasn't at ease with regard to the dark lady—whereas the stars show clear as ever they showed *any thin'*, that the dark lady was only temporary and threatened, and nothin' reel serious—why, I made so free as jist to go right straight to Madam dee Rennet and ease her mind on that point—and I did."

"Great heavens!" Brant yelled. "You infernal meddler! what have you done? I don't know a dark woman in the world! What have you said?—oh, curse it!" he cried, as he realized, from the pain of its extinction, that hope had been alive in his heart, "what *have* you done?—you devil!"

He turned on his heel and rushed off toward Madame de Renette's house.

"This *does* settle it," he thought. "There's no getting an idea like that out of a woman's head."

.

"I understand," he said, as he hurriedly presented himself to the lady of his love, "that a madman has been here—"

"Yes," said Mme. de Renette, severely.

"You didn't pay any attention to his nonsense?"

"About the dark woman?" inquired Mme. de Renette.

"Why, there's no other woman, dark or light—"

"I don't know whether there is or not, Richard," said Mme. de Renette, with icy distinctness; "but I know that there won't be, after—well, sir, could you break your June engagement for—me?"

And Zozo was justified.

AN OLD, OLD STORY

I SUPPOSE the Tullingworth-Gordons were good Americans at heart; but the Tullingworth-Gordons were of English extraction, and, as somebody once said, the extraction had not been completely successful—a great deal of the English soil clung to the roots of the family tree.

They lived on Long Island, in a very English way, in a manor-house which was as English as they could make it, among surroundings quite respectably English for Americans of the third or fourth generation.

They had two English servants and some other American “help”; but they called the Americans by their last names, which anglified them to some extent. They had a servants’ hall, and a butler’s pantry, and a page in buttons, and they were unreasonably proud of the fact that one of their Tory ancestors had been obliged to leave New York for Halifax, in 1784, having only the alternative of a more tropical place of residence. I do not know whether they really held that the signers of the Declaration of Independence committed a grave error; but I do know that when they had occasion to speak of Queen Victoria, they always referred to her as “Her Majesty.”

"I see by the *Mail* to-night," Mr. Tullingworth-Gordon would say to his wife, "that Her Majesty has presented the poor bricklayer who saved seventeen lives and lost both his arms at the Chillingham-on-Frees disaster with an India shawl and a copy of the *Life of the Prince Consort*."

"Her Majesty is always *so* generous!" Mrs. Tullingworth-Gordon would sigh; "and *so* considerate of the common people!"

Mr. Tullingworth-Gordon was a rich man, and he was free to indulge the fancy of his life, and to be as English as his name; and he engaged those two English servants to keep up the illusion.

It is the tale of the menials that I have to tell—the tale of the loves of Samuel Bilson, butler, and Sophronia Huckins, "which 'Uckins it ever was an' so it were allays called, and which 'Uckins is good enough for me, like it was good enough for my parents now departed, and there is 'ope for 'eaven for chapel-goers, though a Church-of-England woman I am myself."

Sophronia Huckins was lady's maid to Mrs. Tullingworth-Gordon, housekeeper to Mr. and Mrs. Tullingworth-Gordon, and, in a way, autocrat and supreme ruler over the whole house of Tullingworth-Gordon. There were other servants, as I have said, but, in their several departments, Bilson and Sophronia were king and queen. Of course, at the first, there was some friction between these two potentates. For ten years they

scratched and sparred and jostled; for ten years after that they lived in comfortable amity, relieving their feelings by establishing a reign of terror over the other servants; and then—ah, then—began the dawn of another day. Bilson was careless about the wine; Sophronia took to the wearing of gowns unbefitting a maid of forty years. It broke upon the Tullingworth-Gordon mind that something was in the wind, and that the conservative quiet of their domestic service was likely to be troubled.

Meanwhile, Nature, unconscious of the proprieties of the situation, was having her own way in the little passage back of the butler's pantry.

"You say"—the housekeeper spoke with a certain sternness—"as how you have loved me for ten long years. But I say as how it would 'ave been more to your credit, Samuel Bilson, to 'ave found it out afore this, when, if I do say it myself, there was more occasion."

"It's none the wuss, Sophronia, for a-bein' found out now," rejoined the butler, sturdily: "what you was, you is to me, an' I don't noways regret that you ain't what you was, in point of beauty, to 'ave young men an' sich a-comin' between us, as an engaged pair."

"'Oo's an engaged pair?" demanded Sophronia, with profound dignity.

"Us," said Mr. Bilson, placidly: "or to be considered as sich."

"I ain't considered us as sich," said Sophronia, coquettishly: "not as yet."

Mr. Bilson was stacking up dishes on the shelves in the passage-way. He paused in his labors; put his hands on his hips, and faced his tormenting charmer with determination in his eye.

“Sophronia ’Uckins!” he said: “you’re forty, this day week; that much I know. Forty’s forty. You’ve kep’ your looks wonderful, an’ you ’ave your teeth which Providence give you. But forty’s forty. If you mean Bilson, you mean Bilson now, ’ere in this ’ere cupboard-extension, your ’and an’ your ’art, to love, honor, an’ obey, so ’elp you. Now, ’ow goes it?”

It went Mr. Bilson’s way. Sophronia demurred, and for a space of some few weeks she was doubtful; then she said “No”—but in the end she consented.

Why should she not? Bilson had been a saving man. No luxurious furniture beautified his little room over the stables. His character was above reproach. He allowed himself one glass of port each day from Mr. Tullingworth-Gordon’s stock; but there he drew the line. Such as it was, the master of the house had his own wine, every drop, except that solitary glass of port—save on one occasion.

And Sophronia Huckins was the occasion of that occasion. Smooth and decorous ran the course of true love for four months on end. Mrs. Tullingworth-Gordon had been made acquainted with the state of affairs; had raged, had cooled, and had got to that point where the natural

woman arose within her, and she began to think about laying out a trousseau for the bride. Fair was the horizon; cloudless the sky. Then came the heavy blow of Fate.

When Cupid comes to you at forty years, he is likely to be something wrinkled, more or less fat and pursy, a trifle stiff in the joints. You must humor him a little; you must make believe, and play that he is young and fair. It takes imagination to do this, and in imagination Sophronia was deficient. Her betrothal was not two months old when she suddenly realized that there was something grotesque and absurd about it. How did she get the idea? Was it an echo of the gossip of the other servants? Did she see the shopkeepers, quick to catch all the local gossip, smiling at her as she went about the little town on her domestic errands? Was there something in Bilson's manners that told her that he felt, in his inmost heart, that he had got to the point where he had to take what he could get, and that he held her lucky to have been conveniently accessible at that critical juncture?

We cannot know. Perhaps Bilson was to blame. A man may be in love—over head and ears in love—and yet the little red feather of his vanity will stick out of the depths, and proclaim that his self-conceit is not yet dead.

Perhaps it was Bilson: perhaps it was some other cause. It matters not. One dull November day, Sophronia Huckins told Samuel Bilson that she could not and would not marry him.

"It was my intent, Samuel; but I 'ave seen it was not the thing for neither of us. If you had 'a' seen your way clear five or ten or may be fifteen years ago, I don't say as it wouldn't 'a' been different. But as to sich a thing *now*, I may 'ave been foolish a-listenin' to you last July; but what brains I 'ave is about me now, an' I tell you plain, Samuel Bilson, it can't never be."

To Bilson this came like a clap of thunder out of the clearest and sunniest of skies. If the Cupid within him had grown old and awkward, he was unaware of it. To his dull and heavily British apprehension, it was the same Cupid that he had known in earlier years. The defection of his betrothed was a blow from which he could not recover.

"Them women," he said, "is worse'n the measles. You don't know when they're comin' out, an' you don't know when they're goin' in."

The blow fell upon him late one evening, long after dinner; when everything had been put to rights. He was sitting in the butler's pantry, sipping his one glass of port, when Sophronia entered and delivered her dictum.

She went out and left him—left him with the port. She left him with the sherry; she left him with the claret, with the old, old claret, with the comet year, with the wine that had rounded the Cape, with the Cognac, with the Chartreuse, with the syrupy Curaçoa and the Eau de Dantzic, and with the Scotch whiskey that Mr. Tullingworth-

Gordon sometimes drank in despite of plain American Rye.

She left him with the structure of a lifetime shattered; with the love of twenty years nipped in its late-bourgeoning bud. She left him alone, and she left him with a deadly nepenthe at hand.

He fell upon those bottles, and, for once in his quiet, steady, conservative life, he drank his fill. He drank the soft, sub-acid claret; he drank the nutty sherry; he drank the yellow Chartreuse and the ruddy Curaçoa. He drank the fiery Cognac, and the smoky Scotch whiskey. He drank and drank, and as his grief rose higher and higher, high and more high he raised the intoxicating flood.

At two o'clock of that night, a respectable butler opened a side-door in the mansion of Mr. Tullingworth-Gordon, and sallied forth to cool his brow in the midnight air.

He was singing as they brought him back on a shutter, in the early morning; but it was not wholly with drunkenness, for delirium had hold of him. Down to the south of the house were long stretches of marsh, reaching into the Great South Bay, and there he had wandered in his first intoxication. There he had stepped over the edge of a little dyke that surrounded Mr. Tallingworth-Gordon's pike-pond—where all the pike died, because the water was too salt for them—and there they found him lying on his back, with one of the most interesting cases of compound fracture in his right leg that has yet been put on record, and

with the flat stones that topped the dyke lying over him.

They took him to his room over the stable, and put him to bed, and sent for the doctor. The doctor came, and set the leg. He also smelt of Mr. Bilson's breath, and gazed upon Mr. Bilson's feverish countenance, and said:

"Hard drinker, eh? We'll have trouble with him, probably. Hasn't he got anybody to look after him?"

This query found its way up to the manor-house of the Tullingworth-Gordons. It came, in some way, to the ears of Sophronia. Shortly after dinner-time she appeared in the chamber of Bilson.

Bilson was "coming out of it." He was conscious, he was sore; he was heavy of heart and head. He looked up, as he lay on his bed, and saw a comely, middle-aged Englishwoman, sharp of feature, yet somehow pleasant and comforting, standing by his bed.

"Sophronia!" he exclaimed.

"Hush!" she said; "the medical man said you wasn't to talk."

"Sophronia—'t ain't you!"

"P'r'aps it ain't," said Sophronia, sourly; "p'r'aps it's a cow, or a 'orse or a goat, or anythin' that is my neighbor's. But the best I know, it's me, an' I've come to 'ave an eye on you."

"Sophronia!" gasped the sufferer; "'t ain't no ways proper."

"'T's goin' to be proper, Samuel Bilson. You

wait, an' you'll see what you'll see. 'Ere 'e comes."

Mr. Bilson's room was reached by a ladder, coming up through a hole in the floor. Through this hole came a peculiarly shaped felt hat; then a pale youthful face; then a vest with many buttons.

"To 'ave and to 'old," said Sophronia. "'Ere 'e is."

The head came up, and a long, thin body after it. Pale and gaunt, swaying slightly backward and forward, like a stiff cornstalk in a mild breeze, the Reverend Mr. Chizzy stood before them and smiled vaguely.

The Reverend Mr. Chizzy was only twenty-four, and he might have passed for nineteen; but he was so high a churchman that the mould of several centuries was on him. He was a priest without a cure; but, as some of his irreverent friends expressed it, he was "in training" for the Rectorship of St. Bede's the Less, a small church in the neighborhood, endowed by Mr. Tullingworth-Gordon and disapproved of by his Bishop, who had not yet appointed a clergyman. The Bishop had been heard to say that he had not yet made up his mind whether St. Bede's the Less was a church or some new kind of theatre. Nevertheless, Mr. Chizzy was on hand, living under the wing of the Tullingworth-Gordons, and trying to make the good Church-of-England people of the parish believe that they needed him and his candles and his choir-boys.

Behind Mr. Chizzy came two limp little girls, hangers-on of the Tullingworth-Gordon household by grace of Mrs. Tullingworth-Gordon's charity. In New England they would have been called "chore-girls." The Tullingworth-Gordons called them "scullery maids."

Bilson half rose on his elbow in astonishment, alarm and indignation.

"Sophronia 'Uckins," he demanded, "what do this 'ere mean? I ain't a-dyin', and I ain't got no need of a clergyman, thank 'eaven. And no more this ain't a scullery, Mrs. 'Uckins."

"This," said Sophronia, pointing at the clergyman as though he were a wax-figure in a show, "this is to wed you and me, Samuel Bilson, and *them*" (she indicated the scullery maids), "them witnesses it."

"Witnesses *wot?*" Mr. Bilson inquired, in a yell.

"Witnesses our marriage, Samuel Bilson. Nuss you I cannot, both bein' single, and nussed you must and shall be. Now set up and be marri'd quiet."

Mr. Bilson's physical condition forbade him to leap from the bed; but his voice leaped to the rafters above him.

"Marri'd!" he shouted: "I'll die fust!"

"Die you will," said Sophronia, calmly but sternly, "if married you ain't, and that soon."

"Sophronia!" Bilson's voice was hollow and deeply reproachful; "you 'ave throwed me over."

"I 'ave," she assented.

"And 'ere I am."

"And there you are."

"Sophronia, you 'ave not treated me right."

"I 'ave not, Samuel Bilson," Miss Huckins cheerfully assented; "I might 'ave known as you was not fit to take care of yourself. But I mean to do my dooty now, so will you 'ave the kindness to button your clo'es at the neck, and sit up?"

Mr. Bilson mechanically fastened the neck-band of his night-shirt and raised himself to the sitting posture.

"Mrs. Huckins," Mr. Chizzy interrupted, in an uncertain way; "I didn't understand—you did not tell me—there does not appear to have been the usual preliminary arrangement for this most sacred and solemn ceremony."

Sophronia turned on him with scorn in her voice and bearing.

"Do I understand, sir, as you find yourself in a 'urry?"

"I am not in a hurry—oh, no. But—dear me, you know, I can't perform the ceremony under these circumstances."

Miss Huckins grew more profoundly scornful.

"Do you know any himpediment w'y we should not be lawfully joined together in matrimony?"

"Why," said the perturbed cleric, "he doesn't want you."

"'E doesn't know what 'e wants," returned Sophronia, grimly; "if women waited for men to find out w'en they wanted wives, there'd be more old maids than there is. If you'll be good

enough to take your book in your 'and, sir, I'll see to 'im."

Bilson made one last faint protest.

"'T wouldn't be right, Sophronia," he wailed; "I ain't wot I was; I'm a wuthless and a busted wreck. I can't tie no woman to me for life. It ain't doin' justice to neither."

"If you're what you say you are," said Sophronia, imperturbably, "and you know better than I do, you should be glad to take wot you can get. If I'm suited, don't *you* complain."

"Mrs. Huckins," the young clergyman broke in, feebly asserting himself, "this is utterly irregular."

"I know it is," said Sophronia; "and we're a-waitin' for you to set it straight."

The two chore-girls giggled. A warm flush mounted to Mr. Chizzy's pale face. He hesitated a second; then nervously opened his book, and began the service. Sophronia stood by the bedside, clasping Bilson's hand in a grasp which no writhing could loosen.

"Dearly beloved," Mr. Chizzy began, addressing the two chore-girls; and with a trembling voice he hurried on the important question:

"Wilt thou have this woman to be thy wedded wife?—"

"N—yah!"

Bilson had begun to say "No;" but Sophronia's firm hand had tightened on his with so powerful a pressure that his negative remonstrance ended in a positive yell.

"Ah, *really*," broke in Mr. Chizzy; "I cannot proceed, M— M— Miss—ah, what's your name?—I positively can't!"

"*Mrs. Bilson*," returned the unmoved Sophronia. "Are you intending for to part 'usband and wife at this point, sir? Excuse me; but we're a-waitin' of your convenience."

Mr. Chizzy was a deep red in the face. His pallor had given place to a flush quite as ghastly in its way. The blood was waltzing in giddy circles through his brain as he read on and on.

No church—no candles—no robes—no choiring boys. Only this awful woman, stern as death, commanding him and Bilson. Why had he yielded to her? Why had he permitted himself to be dragged hither? Why was he meekly doing her bidding? Mr. Chizzy felt as though he were acting in some ghastly, nightmarish dream.

"*Then shall the Minister say: Who giveth this Woman to be married to this Man?*"

That roused Mr. Chizzy from his trance. It came late; but it seemed to open a way out of the horribly irregular business. He paused and tried to fix an uncertain eye on Sophronia.

"Have you a Father or a Friend here?" he demanded.

"Jim!" said Sophronia, loudly.

"Ma'am?" came a voice from the lower story of the stable.

"Say 'I do.'"

"Ma'am?"

"Say 'I do'—an' say it directly!"

"Say—say?—what do you want, Miss Huck-ins?"

"*Jim!*" said Sophronia, sternly, "open your mouth an' say 'I do' out loud, or I come down there immejit!"

"I do!" came from the floor below.

"'Ere's the ring," said Sophronia, promptly; "I, M., take thee, N.—if you'll 'ave the kindness to go on, sir, we won't detain you any longer than we can 'elp. I'm give away, I believe; an' I'll take 'im, M."

"Forasmuch as," began the Reverend Mr. Chizzy, a few minutes later, addressing the chore-girls, "Samuel and Sophronia have consented together in holy wedlock—"

He stopped suddenly. Up through the opening in the floor arose the head of a youthful negro, perhaps fourteen years of age. Mr. Chizzy recognized him as the stable-boy, a jockey of some local fame.

"What you want me to say I done do?" he inquired.

"Mrs.— Mrs.— Bilson!" said Mr. Chizzy, with a tremulous indignation in his voice; "did this negro infant act as your parent or friend, just now?"

"'E give me away," replied the unabashed bride.

Mr. Chizzy looked at her, at Bilson, at Jim, and at the chore-girls. Then he opened his book again and finished the ceremony.

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The Tullingworth-Gordons were angry when they heard of the marriage. They missed the two main-stays of their domestic system. But—well, Bilson was growing old, and Sophronia was growing tyrannical. Perhaps it was better as it was. And, after all, they had always wanted a Lodge, and a Lodge-keeper, and the old ice-house stood near the gate—a good two hundred feet from the house.

It was nearly a year before Bilson could walk around with comfort. Indeed, eighteen months later, he did not care to do more than sit in the sun and question Fate, while Mrs. Bilson tried to quiet a noisy baby within the Lodge.

“’Ere I am laid up, as I should be,” said Bilson; “an there’s an active woman a-goin’ around with a baby, and a-nussin’ of him. If things was as they should be, in the course of nachur, we’d ’ave exchanged jobs, we would.”

THE SUBURBAN SAGE
STRAY NOTES AND COMMENTS
ON HIS SIMPLE LIFE

MR. CHEDBY ON A REGULAR NUISANCE

“**I**T seems quite possible,” I said to my wife; “and if Chedby ever had anything of his own that I could possibly use, I should certainly go down and make a pretense of borrowing it, just to get a look about the place. But I hardly know the man, long as he’s been here, and I should suppose he might think it strange if I dropped in there at this late date with no ostensible reason—that is, of course, if it *is* so.”

My wife pondered a moment, and then came to my rescue.

“You might go down on your afternoon walk,” she suggested, “and ask him if that dog that strayed in here yesterday belongs to him.”

“That’s a good idea,” said I; “I’ll put the dog in a leash, and take him right down there.”

“I don’t think I would take the dog down with you, dear,” my wife said, thoughtfully.

“Why not?” I asked.

“Well, you know best, my dear,” she replied meekly; “but I only thought that if you were just to *say* that the dog had strayed in here, and that he seemed to be quite a valuable fox-terrier—”

"I see," I said, with a sudden flash of illumination; "and he's such a really valuable animal that I hate to take the responsibility of keeping him."

"I think it would be well, my dear," said my wife, sedately. "The poor creature cried all night in the cellar, and neither of our dogs will have him about the place."

Inside of half an hour I presented myself at Mr. Chedby's gate. He lived the better part of a mile away from me, near the River Road.

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I found Mr. Chedby industriously pulling an iron roller up and down the bit of grass-plot which is known in our suburban community by a polite and friendly fiction as a "lawn." The roller was old, and of a somewhat battered appearance, and, being unusually small and light, it carried on its inside, besides the usual complement of weights, an extra one in the shape of a small iron glue-kettle, which had been filled up solidly with melted lead. Mr. Chedby greeted me cordially, but he responded to my inquiry with something like suspicion.

"I did lose a fox-terrier," he said, after some hesitation; "but it was most two weeks ago, and I guess he's been snapped up long ago. He was a fine-blooded dog. Is the one you've got a fine-blooded dog?"

I assured him that the dog's blood was the finest of the fine, and this seemed to encourage

him to think that it might be his dog, after all; but I could not help feeling that he had his doubts about the genuineness of my enthusiasm. And, for a fact, when you come to think of it, it doesn't look natural and unaffected to be *too* honest in horse and dog matters.

This became quite evident when, on Mr. Chedby's proposing to look in on me some time in the course of the week to see if he could identify the dog, I had the indiscretion to urge him to fix an earlier date. This chilled his interest to such an extent that he hastily decided that it could not be his dog, and that if it was, he didn't want him, anyway.

He must have seen the disappointment on my face, for he went on talking in a soothing strain.

"The fact is, Mr. Sage," he said, as he and the roller drew up in front of me; "the fact is that a man who lives in one of these suburban towns never knows half the time what he has got and what he hasn't got. I don't know; that may be my dog, or it may not. Again, it may be some other man's dog; and I've got so that I sometimes think I don't care." He stacked himself up against the roller handle, and began to discourse with the air of a heavy philosopher.

"Yes, sir," he said; "that's the state we're in in these suburban towns; and do you know what, in my opinion, is the cause that brings it about? It's the borrowing habit, sir; the borrowing habit! The borrowing habit has got so grafted on us that I find it mighty hard, some-

times, to keep out of the way of the fatal infection that I see all around me. It begins—it strikes in—just as soon as a man moves here from the city. Take this family that moved in next door, for instance, two days ago. I don't suppose they'd ever known what it was to borrow a thing before in their lives, but, Lord! they caught the disease right off. First, they borrowed a box-opener from the man next door on the other side. Then they sent over the way and borrowed a drawing of tea. Then, by Jove! they came over here and borrowed some hot water out of the kitchen kettle to make the tea with. Well, I don't say anything against that. Of course, when you move into a strange place you have to depend upon your neighbors a little. I had to do it, myself, when I first moved out here. But I only mention it to show how the disease begins. It will be milk next; they always want to borrow milk. Then it will go on to butter and eggs. Sugar, of course, and tea and coffee right along—that's the regular thing. Pretty soon it will be a bucket of coal or a barrow load of kindlings. Then they get to hanging pictures and putting up shelves around the house, and then it's hammers and saws and nails. Hammers and saws sometimes come back, when you go after them, but nails, never! I knew a man who lent a keg of nails, once, to a neighbor's wife. Some months afterward he met the neighbor, and the neighbor says to him: 'Oh, Smith, didn't my folks borrow some brads

or nails or some blame thing or other from you a while ago? I'll tell my hardware man to send them up to you.' Well, when Smith got home, what do you think he found? A paper of carpet tacks from the hardware dealer. Yes, sir; a paper of carpet tacks. Did he kick? Not much. He knew he was lucky to get even that. And, talking about hammers, I can tell you the funniest story, just to show how this borrowing habit weakens a man's sense of individual ownership in property. Some time ago I missed a hammer that I'd been working with, and had left on the front stoop for half an hour or so. Next day I met a man—I won't say who he is, but he don't live far from here—and says he to me, 'Oh, Mr. Chedby, I was going along the street here the other day, and I saw the hammer I lent you lying on your front stoop. I happened to need it just then, so I took it along with me.' Well, sir, I didn't say anything to him; but that man had no more right to that hammer than you have; and it didn't look anything like his hammer. The hammer he took belonged to Robinson, down the street here, and his hammer was up in the garret in my tool-chest all the time. But, of course, I had to tell Robinson, when he came out for *his* hammer. And I understand that there's been a coolness between the two of them ever since. Well, you couldn't expect anything else. That's one of the indirect effects of the disease. Oh, I tell you, the borrowing habit is the curse of suburban life. It's got to be a

regular nuisance, sir; a regular unmitigated, unqualified damned nuisance, if you'll excuse the profanity."

Here Mr. Chedby paused and mopped his perspiring forehead. The sinking sun glowed red through the evening haze. It reminded me that my homeward walk up the hill would take me longer than the journey down; and that the real purpose of my mission had been accomplished, even though I hadn't got rid of the dog.

"Mr. Chedby," I said, as I turned away, "when you are quite through with using that roller, will you be so kind as to send your man up to my place with it? I've got a lot of new lawn to roll, or I'd be happy to spare it to you as much longer as you want it. But if you can send your man up with it in the morning, I'll be much obliged. (He had no man; but it is a polite suburban fiction to assume that everybody keeps one.)

If I had cherished any hopes of disturbing Mr. Chedby's serenity, I should have been disappointed.

"Sho!" he said; "is that queer old contraption yours? I was just wondering whoever owned it. I got it down the street here at Higginbotham's. The family wasn't at home, and there was nobody that could tell me anything about it. Why, that old thing has been kicking about this neighborhood for more than six months."

"More than a year, I think, Mr. Chedby,"

said I. "You'll send your man up with it in the morning?"

Mr. Chedby looked at the roller and then at the long road up the hill to my house. Then he turned to me in a burst of hearty cordiality:

"Why, I am clean through with it," he said. "I wouldn't have kept you out of it a minute if I'd known you wanted it. You take it right along with you now. Don't mind about me. My work can wait. Take it right along!"

I thanked him kindly, but I told him that it would be quite time enough if his man brought it up in the morning.

EARLY STAGES OF THE BLOOMER FEVER

FOR several weeks this Spring I was a hay-widower. I take this term to be the masculine equivalent of "grass-widow" as applied to a member of a matrimonial firm temporarily parted from the rest of the household, and leading a separate but not wholly independent existence. By whatever name you choose to call my state, I was certainly, for the time being, quite bereft of family ties. Mrs. Sage and the children and the children's nurse were all visiting Mrs. Sage's family to foregather with an elderly uncle who had just returned from India in a state of sickening and offensive affluence. Personally, I do not believe that he will ever pan out one cent's worth; but that is neither here nor there. The domestic staff had been allowed a vacation, all except Bartholomew. Bartholomew is our man—or, at least, as near to the man as we have yet got. Newcomers in the town speak of him as a boy, until they get into suburban ways, and learn that that is not polite either to him or to his employer. Bartholomew remained to guard the house, and in this occupation he took great pride and pleasure, for it gave him a good excuse for sleeping with his grandfather's old percussion-cap shotgun by his bedside, so that he could be able to

repel burglars at a moment's notice. You might have abstracted seventeen steel safes from the house without awakening Bartholomew, and no earthly power could ever have made that gun go off; but Bartholomew slept proud and happy all the same.

I made no use of my lonely mansion, except to go there to do my work, which is the writing of such things as this. I had no need to dwell within its silent walls. The lot of a hay-widower in a suburban town is not unhappy by any means; in fact, his condition makes him a valuable member of society. He may be invited to dinner without his wife—and every housekeeper knows what that means. It is one thing to invite the unobservant male animal to take pot-luck with you, and it is quite another to subject the every-day fatigue-dress style of your domestic economy to the keen and critical feminine eye. So it came about that I got not only dinner invitations, but bids to stay a week at this house and a week at that, and I made quite a picnic of my desolation and abandonment.

Now, when I say I am going to give you an abstract of a study in feminine ethics, which I made under the roof of my good friend, Biddleby, I want you to understand that I am violating no confidence imposed upon me by the generous hospitality which I enjoyed. I make this statement with Mrs. Biddleby's full consent and permission.

I am fond of making studies of feminine

methods of marital management. I know, of course, that I, myself, am managed at home; but I do not know just how it is done, and I am not likely to be let to know. But while the process of management is generally imperceptible to the husband who is being managed, it is often quite clearly visible to the casual onlooker; and it amuses me greatly to see the manipulation of my fellows. Whatever I may think of myself, I can smile a superior smile at their weakness and blindness. I will now proceed to my brief statement, which is based partly upon what Mrs. Biddleby afterward told me.

It happened one day as, in going to my room, I passed by the door of Mrs. Biddleby's sewing-room, the draught of an open window blew against my feet three or four pieces of light-brown tissue paper cut into curious shapes, and perforated with many little round holes. Seeing that there was nobody around to take charge of them, I carried them into the sewing-room and looked for something heavy to lay on them. The only thing I found was a huge pamphlet that lay open on a chair. I could not help noticing that the open pages showed a number of designs for a garment then coming noticeably into general use, but still regarded in conservative feminine circles with a certain degree of distrust and even disfavor. I need not say that I got out of the room quickly and quietly; and that I tried not to consider the remarkable like-

ness in shape between the pieces of paper I had gathered up and certain dotted designs on the paper under my eye. I knew, of course, that Mrs. Biddleby was taking bicycle lessons.

The next day I brought the Biddleby mail home with my own when I came from the post-office, and it consisted principally of bulky envelopes bearing the names of New York dry-goods houses. I have been so long married that it would be idle to deny that I knew that they contained samples of dress goods. I also knew that Mrs. Biddleby had recently expressed her satisfaction with having got done with the dress-makers, for that season, at least.

It was some two or three days after this, that as I was going from my house to Biddleby's, I encountered Mrs. Biddleby and three of her friends practicing bicycle riding on a smooth stretch of macadam road. They had evidently got beyond the care of their tutor, but they were still taking turns at practice work on a hired bicycle. I joined them, for they were evidently quite past the nervous state, and I sat with those who were not riding, on a low stone wall, and watched the rider on the wheel exhibit her newly acquired skill. Mrs. Biddleby was easily the cleverest and most self-possessed rider of them all, and I was somewhat surprised when she dismounted and sat down beside us, and said in an almost petulant tone:

"Well, I declare, I really don't know what I am going to do about it! I am afraid I shall

have to give the whole thing up. I certainly can't attempt to ride if my skirt keeps catching the way it does."

I had not observed that her skirt had caught, and I was just exactly fool enough to tell her so.

"Oh, well, you couldn't have noticed, or perhaps you're just saying so out of kindness, but I came near having a terrible fall twice on my way up the road and once coming down; and I'm sure I've ripped every bit of binding off on this side. Look there!" and she pointed to where nearly three-quarters of an inch of braid had fetched loose.

"Skirts are a perfect misery, anyway," said Miss Applegate, the next best rider in the quartette; and she turned to me, and added, audaciously: "I do sometimes wish that women could dress the same way you men do—"

"I agree with you entirely," said Mrs. Biddleby. "And, do you know, when I was down on the River Road the other day, and saw one of those women coming along with bloomers on, I almost envied the vulgar thing, she looked so easy and comfortable."

"Oh, Milly! how can you say so?" cried another of the ladies; but a fourth came to Mrs. Biddleby's assistance.

"Well, I saw her, too; and, do you know, I was thinking the very same thing. And, really, Mrs. Biddleby, to tell you the truth, I didn't think she looked vulgar a bit."

"Well, I don't know as I ought to have called

her exactly vulgar," Mrs. Biddleby amended; "but, of course, you know, it does look a little—how shall I call it?—unconventional."

Then all the four ladies held a little autopsy on the word, and decided that the English language didn't furnish anything suitable. So they had recourse to French and called it *outré*.

"Well, I don't care," said Mrs. Biddleby, summing up; "I think we're all of us too much slaves of fashion, and I am sure if I thought I could look half as well in them as that woman did, I should wear them, whatever people might say."

Encouraged by this bold stand, the lady who had been so shocked at first said that she thought so, too, and she had all along.

Then I put my foot into it again. I said:

"If your skirts catch, why couldn't you make them a little shorter?"

Mrs. Biddleby turned on me in a very pretty flame of indignation, and exhibited her skirt, which was so high that it absolutely exposed a small sample of her ankle; and she said:

"There, you wouldn't have me wear any shorter skirt than that, would you? Why it's positively indecent as it is! No; of course you men don't know about such things; but I can tell you that a woman takes her life in her hands every time that she goes on a bicycle with a skirt on."

.
Mrs. Biddleby had made her husband promise

to buy her a machine as soon as she had learned to ride really well; but Biddleby, for a reason which I will mention later on, was quite cool about the project. Therefore, it devolved upon Mrs. Biddleby to bring up the topic every day, so as to keep him informed of her progress. Hitherto her reports had been cheerful and encouraging; but this evening I noticed that she dwelt at great length on the bruises and sprains she had suffered when she fell, in consequence of catching her skirt in the sprocket. The next morning at breakfast, she was so lame that she could hardly move, and very low in her mind. She told Biddleby that he wasn't sorry enough for her. He said yes, he was, and suggested arnica. She explained that she suffered principally in her mind, because she feared she would have to give up riding, just as she was doing so well. Biddleby said just what I said about the skirts, and got just what I got. Then the lady hooked her fish.

"Well," said Biddleby, as he got up to take the train, "if that's the case, I don't see what you can do about it, dear, unless you get a pair of those two-legged thingumajiggers—what do you call them?"

"Oh, Henry!" cried his wife, in tones of horror; "you wouldn't have me wear bloomers!"

"Better than breaking your neck, I should think," said Henry, absent-mindedly, as he went out of the door.

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Next day it rained, and the day after that. The third day, however, was fair, and, as soon as the bicycle lessons began, I joined the ladies. They had not reached the ground more than two minutes in advance of me, but as soon as I came up I heard Mrs. Biddleby saying:

“Do you know, my dear, I really don’t know what I *shall* do. Henry is absolutely set on the idea of my wearing bloomers, and you know how determined he is when he gets an idea into his head. Why, only day before yesterday he said to me, as he was going to the train: ‘My dear, it is simply a case of life and death, and you should not let any other considerations outweigh that!’ ”

I lingered with them only four or five minutes; but before I left, the three other dear humbugs had banded themselves together to wear bloomers, just by way of giving moral support to Mrs. Biddleby.

.
But this is not quite all. Here is Biddleby’s reason for looking coldly on the bicycle project, as stated to me when the lessons first began:

“I’d be more than glad to get my wife a bicycle if it wasn’t that I’ve heard so much about accidents that happen to women riding in long dresses; and, of course, there’s no consideration on the face of the earth that would make Mrs. Biddleby put on one of those sensible Zouave trouser rigs—what do they call them, now?—Bloomers? Oh, yes! that’s the name.”

THE SUBURBAN HORSE

I HAVE often wondered where the suburban horse lives before he comes to the suburbs; and I have sometimes thought that there must be people who make a special business of going about all over the country and collecting misfit horses of odd, job-lot sizes and styles, for distribution in suburban towns.

City horses and real country horses may be readily divided into various grades and classes; recognizable even to one as ignorant of such matters as I am. Though every householder here—except myself—owns one horse, at least, I am sure that you could not pick anything remotely resembling a matched pair out of the whole lot. I am speaking, of course, of the true suburban horse. I have several neighbors of sporty proclivities, who own costly teams of high-blooded horses, which are spoken of in a reverential sort of way as “fine actors,” or “grand steppers.” I do not speak from personal knowledge of the quality of these animals; I only know that they walk as if they had corns, and that they are always sick; and these, I am assured, are signs of high blood and great commercial value in a horse. But I am not speaking about animals such as these. You may see

their like everywhere where people are trying to get rid of their money. But the suburban horse belongs to the suburbs, and is a thing to be studied all by himself.

In the first place, he is no particular kind of horse—or he is any and every kind, as you please to put it. His quality, character and station among horses depend almost entirely upon his ownership and employment; and he has only to change hands to change his nature. He is one horse if *you* own him, and another horse if *I* own him; and he may be any number of horses in the course of his long and peaceful but much varied existence. Having no horse or carriage of my own, good or bad, to provide for, I am a mere spectator of other men's horses, and how they play their parts, and you have no idea how diversely they are presented unto me.

Take the case of Rix, for instance. I take his case because he is the horse I know best, and because he is one of the very few that I can recognize at sight. In the way of horse-flesh it takes something, as a rule, about as showy as a calico circus pony to attract my attention and fix itself in my memory. But Rix and I got personally acquainted when I first came to the town, and I have since watched his checkered career with a friendly interest.

When I first knew him he belonged to a market-gardener in the next county, who used to come to my door with his vegetables. The gardener was a very intelligent man, and I got into

the habit of talking botany with him while I fed his own things to his own horse. The town was quite small then, and decidedly lonely at times, and even tree-peddlers and book-agents were welcomed with a cordiality and courtesy that sometimes lured them into thinking that we meant to buy. So I used to be very glad to see Rix and the market-gardener, and when the latter gave up the business because he said there was no profit in it, I really felt considerable remorse for the way I had pampered his animal with luxuries at his expense.

The gardener asked me if I knew anybody who wanted to buy a horse. I told him that I had heard the old butcher in Orchard Lane say something about buying a horse; and he asked me to speak to the butcher about it. This I did, and they met in my back yard, and the bargain was struck. I never saw my friend, the gardener, again; but when Rix came around with the butcher's meat, I felt as though he were quite an old acquaintance.

Now, up to this date, I wish you to observe, the horse was devoid of any noticeable characteristic. He had no pedigree. The gardener had bought him from a wandering Swede, and had named him Rix-Dollar, with a vague idea that he ought to do something Scandinavian in the matter. He was a very dark bay horse, neither large nor small, of an equable disposition, and quite sound and healthy. Indeed, I may say for Rix that he was never sick but once in his life.

I was present when the butcher bought him, and I heard his points discussed; but I could not make out that they were different from those of any other horse.

In the course of a few months the old butcher died, and left no immediate successor. I had to go elsewhere for my meat; and I really missed the sight of Rix jogging deliberately on his daily rounds, with the white-bearded old butcher half-asleep in the wagon.

But one day we heard that a new butcher had taken the old place; and that the new butcher was a great sport, and was going to make things hum in the meat business in our town. I strolled around to Orchard Lane to see what the new butcher was like. He was not in his shop; but as I started homeward I heard a furious clatter of hoofs down the street, and, casting up my eyes, beheld a large, red-faced stranger in a showy vehicle of the dog-cart sort, driving a dark bay horse at a rattling clip. The man was the new butcher, and the horse was Rix—Rix in a showy harness with brass trimmings all over him, with bracelets on his ankles, and with a patent-leather shine on his hoofs. I marvelled much. The butcher did not interest me; but it was clear to my mind that either Rix was acting a part now, or that he had heretofore dissembled his true character. I didn't particularly object to his present frivolous worldliness, but I thought he ought to have let me know before that he was that kind of a horse.

Shortly after this, a friend of mine, whose knowledge of the noble Horse was so profound and pervasive that it came out in his clothes, spent a few days with me looking about the town, with a view to taking a house in the succeeding Fall. He happened to see the butcher drive by behind Rix, and he was as much impressed as a really horsey person ever allows himself to be. He told me that the dog-cart was entirely incorrect in the matter of style, and that the butcher didn't know how to drive; but that the horse was an uncommonly neat little animal, and that if he, my friend, had that horse for six months, he could make something of him.

"I've owned worse, myself, my boy, before this, I can tell you," he said, patting me encouragingly on the shoulder; and I felt that his praise of Rix reflected a certain glory on the whole township, including myself. I didn't say anything to him about Rix's earlier days; for I always make it a point to go light on such particulars when I am talking with a man who wears horse-shoe pins, and has gold whips and wheels and axle-trees, and other miniature imitations of stable upholstery on his watch-chain.

A few weeks later my friend wrote to me, asking me to see if I could buy Rix for him, and have him kept on a neighboring stock-farm until the Fall. He named the figure which he was willing to "go" for the horse. It was a figure that amazed me greatly, when I remembered the modest price for which he had been sold in my

back yard. But I knew better than to say anything about this to my friend; for he was a very good friend, and I should have hated to lose him. Fortunately, it made no practical difference; for the sporty butcher had failed and fled from his creditors, and Rix was legally in the custody of the Sheriff, and bodily in a pasture lot adjoining my place, whence he occasionally wandered into my wife's flower-garden, and ate indiscriminately. Later in the season, a retired clergyman, with a family of five elderly daughters, came to board in my neighborhood, bringing letters of introduction to me. He was in search of a retired place in which to write a six-volume work on palæontology. After he had paid me six or eight protracted calls and set this fact forth at full length, I found him a retired place at a distance of about seven miles. He rewarded my kindness by hiring Rix from the Sheriff and driving his whole family into town three times a week.

In the Fall my friend, whom I shall call Mr. Fornand, came, and took a house in the town. He had to run out every day for a week or so, to get settled, and he frequently took his luncheon at my house. This was very pleasant for me, not only because my friend was good company, but because I stretched a point and told the palæontological clergyman that I had a gentleman who raced horses staying at my house, and he promptly stopped making visits to town. He stopped for so long, indeed, that I had al-

most forgotten him and Rix, too, when one day I came across his capacious carryall standing at the station. He told me that he was going away, and that the Sheriff was going to meet him there, and take charge of Rix again. Part of this was not pleasant news to me; and when, as I was hurrying homeward, I caught up with Fornand going in the same direction, and, shortly afterward, the Sheriff drove past us behind Rix, I said somewhat hastily to my friend:

"There, Fornand, there's that horse of the butcher's you wanted to buy in the Spring. I think you could get him now."

As soon as I had said this I knew that I had made a mistake. A Summer of palæontology had told on Rix, and he had absorbed something of the depressed and mildewed appearance of the prehistoric carryall behind him. But I confess I was somewhat startled when my friend burst out in wild guffaws of derisive mirth, and shouted:

"That horse the one I was looking at? Why, Great Scott! if that isn't the funniest thing I have heard in a year! That horse the butcher's? Well, Sage, I always knew you were pretty green about horses, but I *did* think you had enough gumption to know a first-class animal from an old plug like that."

I didn't attempt to argue with him; I was ashamed, anyway, of Rix's present appearance, and I thought I would let the matter drop. But it didn't drop. He guffawed all the way up to

the house, and then he told my wife what a big joke he had on me. Afterward my wife said to me, kindly but pitifully:

“Well, my dear, I didn’t think you knew much about horses; but I *should* have thought you would have known *Rix*.”

For one moment I thought of setting myself right; and then I concluded to accept my humiliation as a deserved punishment. When a man carries Christian forbearance to the extent of making a plumb fool of himself, he ought to take the consequences.

Rix went at Sheriff’s sale to the teamster who carted away my ashes, and to whom I advanced twenty dollars to buy him. He came to the house twice a week, but I hated to see him now, for he had become a neglected-looking, disreputable, shaggy-haired brute, with worn spots here and there on him, and a generally moth-eaten appearance. I was glad when the teamster sold him to the local expressman, although he was not a success in his new place. Having grown accustomed to hauling shamefully heavy loads, he suddenly found himself hitched, one fine Spring morning, shortly before Easter Sunday, to a light wagon, laden principally with paste-board boxes that had just arrived from New York. When he started to pull on this, he became intoxicated with his comparative freedom, and ran away down the street, scattering Easter millinery and dry-goods right and left. He was sent to the livery stable for safe-keep-

ing; and there a tramp stable-boy, who had been a jockey, bought him for five dollars, took him in hand, treated him in the mysterious ways that are known to jockeys, and actually got him into such a condition that he sold him to an undertaker who had just started a shop in the town. The undertaker was a man who took pride in his business, and he fattened Rix up and groomed him and broke him to hearse so thoroughly that in a few months he was as sleek and wholesome-looking a horse as you would wish to see, and I felt proud of him whenever I met him. He attended only two or three funerals, but his dignity and style were much admired. When the undertaker gave up and went in search of an unhealthier town, there was lively competition for Rix at the auction of the business effects. He went to a local horse-dealer for one hundred and forty dollars. I attended the sale out of curiosity. As I was going away I met my friend Fornand, and I saw from his sheepish manner and from his vain endeavors to keep the catalogue which he held, out of my sight, that he had been among the unsuccessful bidders. I couldn't help it, and I didn't want to. I asked him what he wanted with that old plug. He reddened up; but he had too much capital invested in horsey jewelry to let me call him down.

"That horse is no plug," said he, "though he may have looked like one at one time. The man who's driving may be a plug, and that

makes a horse look like a plug; but if you knew as much about a horse as I do, Sage, you'd know that in the hands of a right kind of man that would be the right kind of horse. And when your uncle tells you that, you don't want to forget it."

Consequently he hired Rix from his new owner, and put him into a scratch spike-team that he got up to impress a Bergen Point man who was thinking of buying his house. This occasioned Rix's one sickness. He caught pink-eye from a thoroughbred.

Since then Rix has been in several hands; but he is still recognizable to his old friends. He worked on a milk route for a while, which quite incapacitated him for the work of the homœopathic physician who bought him next, and who was dreadfully embarrassed by being drawn up in front of various houses where nothing on earth would have induced the inmates to call in an irregular practitioner.

He is now pulling the phaeton of an aged invalid lady, under the guidance of a groom in half-livery. From what I know of him, he is trying his best to assume the demeanor of quiet, slow-going and responsible respectability suitable to his present position. What changes of social status and personal appearance may be in store for him I cannot tell; for he is hardly more than fourteen years old, and, for a suburban horse, that is the prime of life.

THE BUILDING CRAZE

I DROPPED in to see my young friend Pinxter the other night. I knew that it was Mrs. Pinxter's Singing Society night, and I thought that Pinxter might be lonely. He has not been long enough in the town for people to get in the way of dropping in on him; and he cannot go out when his wife is absent; for they are on their first baby, and they don't think it ought to be left alone with the nurse. On such occasions Pinxter is generally almost effusively grateful for my visits. But the other night I noticed a marked difference in his manner. I could not call him cool; indeed, he remarked, in the course of conversation, that he had never met such friends anywhere as he had met in our town, and that I was the dearest of them. But he certainly was absent-minded and preoccupied, and could not help showing some slight signs of relief and satisfaction when I got up to depart, after a very brief stay.

Do not think that I was offended at my reception, and left early for that reason. I was not in the least hurt. As I was approaching the room through the hallway, I had seen Pinxter hastily slip some loose sheets of paper into a

big flat book, like an atlas, and thrust the book under the side-board. During all my call his left hand was playing with a newly sharpened drawing-pencil. Having seen this much, I had but to look at his abstracted countenance, and to calculate the length of his residence in the suburbs, to know perfectly well that Pinxter was under the spell of the Building Craze, and dead to the social world for the time being.

I have seen so many, many cases that it is an old story to me; especially as one case differs from another only in degree of virulence, and not at all in character. Pinxter's will be like every other case that I have seen; and the breaking out of the fever at the normal and usual period only shows that he is a natural-born suburbanite, for such alone does the disease attack. A man who can live a year in a growing suburban town without wanting to build is a man whom Fate is pointing with inexorable finger to the penal cells of a New York flat.

The disease usually begins to fasten itself on young people like the Pinxters during their first Summer in the suburbs. Its approach is gentle, but insidious. It begins to come on when they find out that they are permitted to roam at will over cottages in process of construction. This is a new and strange joy, and at first they go about in simple, unaffected wonderment, making innocent guesses at the mysteries of carpentry and mason-work. Then they get bolder and begin to criticise and offer suggestions,

which last are rejected by the mechanics with profound scorn and a flow of technical language that utterly abashes the suggester.

But nothing checks the progress of the disease when it has once started on its course. In the next stage, the victim begins to learn the technical talk for himself. By the end of the Summer it is not uncommon to hear the victims using lightly and airily such words as: "flashing," "rabbet," "mould-board," "valley," and "popout." Some even learn that in the building trades there is no change in the plural of certain familiar names, such as "sash," "strip," "blind" and "joist"; and that "cornice" is not pronounced as it is spelled. That is, for instance, the professional builder does not say "those cornices," but "them cornish."

Then comes the Fall, and they see the buildings finished that were a while ago only a mystery of naked timbers. Until the new occupants move in, they may still roam through the bare rooms, and pick out what they don't like about each house. And when the tenants move in, there is the delight of calling upon them, and finding out what *they* think of the habitations that are supposed to have been shaped to fit them.

Winter, of course, puts an end to all this; but it initiates the most interesting and active stage of the disease. The Pinxters begin to **DRAW PLANS.**

The first plan that Pinxter draws will be

drawn on the back of an envelope. It will be a simple geometrical figure—a Maltese Cross, perhaps, or an L, or a semi-circle, and he will submit it to his friends, and ask them if they don't think that would be a good shape for a house. He will find that his friends do not seem to be particularly impressed; and, after a while, he, himself, will begin to feel that there is something unsatisfactory about it; and that it requires an effort of the imagination to connect that empty outline with the idea of a habitable house. So he fills it up with rooms, pretty much at random, and tries it on his friends again—"just as a rough idea, you know." Then hard, unsympathetic persons will call his attention to the fact that his front vestibule is larger than his parlor, and that it is unusual, to say the least, to have a dining-room that occupies more than half of the house, and that is accessible only through the kitchen and butler's pantry.

He begins to see that there are realms of architectural knowledge which it behooves him to explore, if he wants to get people to look at his plans. So he stops at the railway news-stand and buys a twenty-five cent book of ready-made dwelling plans. Of course he despises the plans; not because they are despicable—as they certainly are—but because the book cost twenty-five cents and not one dollar. However, he acquires from the book the art and mystery of drawing plans; and, with the aid of a foot rule and a T-square, he finds himself able to turn

out a couple of dozen in the course of a single evening.

Of course he doesn't get just what he wants right at first. He didn't expect to. Building a house is a serious matter, and his means are limited. By this time, too, he has discovered the fact that the size of his house must be fixed by the size of his pile; and that the proportion of one to the other is to be determined by a mathematical calculation of a very strict and inflexible sort. This doesn't really trouble him. He finds that for the money he has to spend he can get a house thirty-five feet square. But, then, he really doesn't want anything larger. All that he has to do is to utilize the space at his disposal to the best advantage. So he sets to work and draws plans, and more plans, and other plans, and different plans again. By this time he has got to doing his work privately and keeping it to himself, so long as it is in the experimental stages. He sees other suburbanites of recent establishment trying the patience of their friends with plans born too young; and he determines that *he* will make no such mistake. When he finally settles upon his plan, it shall be one that is open to no criticism, and that will be instantly accepted, by all who see it, as the ideal house to be constructed in that space for that amount of money. And, when it is done, he will bring it to me and exhibit it with an aspect in which defiant pride blends with patronizing superiority, and he will say to me:

“There! if there’s anything wrong with that, I would like you to let me know what it is.”

Oh, how well I know that plan! It is neatly ruled out on a single sheet of paper; but no single sheet of paper could contain all its glory. It looks at first glance like the ground-map of a municipal building with an orphan asylum annex. Pinxter sits down by me and explains it all, pointing out its beauties with a lead pencil.

“This is the front door,” he says, “and here is the vestibule. I’ve made that good and roomy. I hate these cramped little entrances, don’t you? You see, I have left space here for a hat-rack and an umbrella-stand, and on the other side there are shelves, and a little cupboard to hang coats in. And here, you see, is a place for the baby-carriage, and right opposite it is a locker for my tennis things. Oh! I’ve thought it all out. Now we come into the hall. I like a good big hall, don’t you? I got the idea for this one from one I saw in the house of one of those Standard Oil fellows on Long Island somewhere. You see, I figured to get it big enough to play a game of badminton in. May be that’s unnecessarily large, but that’s better than being all cramped up, you know. Now, there’s the dining-room. May be I might have cut that down a little bit, but my great-aunt has left me her mahogany dining-table in her will, and that seats twenty-two people, you know. Perhaps we shouldn’t really want to use it, but I thought I would take it into consideration. Here’s the library: I haven’t

got books enough to fill it yet; but you must think of the future, you know. This is the drawing-room, with three bay-windows opening on the garden. Won't that be nice in Summer? And for the Winter I've designed this alcove for an inglenook, with a great big old-fashioned fireplace; and a long settee on each side of it. That brings us around to the kitchen; and there I've had to cramp a little to keep within the bounds of space—but ten feet by eleven-and-a-half is quite ample, don't you think so? This little odd corner here I've utilized for my den—just a cozy, snug little place, big enough to put a billiard table in if I should want to. Oh! I tell you, I've used up every inch of space. And now tell me candidly, Sage, do you think that, considering what the house is going to cost, I really could get anything more than I have got out of those dimensions?"

I tell him that I don't see how he possibly could; and he is so pleased by my saying so, that, in a burst of unselfish gratitude, he offers to leave the plan with me over night to feast my eyes on until I go to bed, if I will solemnly engage to give it to him at the station in the morning.

And, as his footsteps go out of hearing down the gravel-walk, I take a pencil and add up the little figures that freckle his neatly drawn plan—7 x 11, 9 x 14—and so on. His thirty-five foot-square house is 72 feet one way by $92\frac{1}{2}$ the other.

Next Winter, when Mrs. Sage and I go to call upon the Pinxters in their new house, Pinxter will move the big arm-chair out of the parlor to make room for unfolding the card-table, and he will say to me, in a casual way: "You see, I had to make a few minor alterations in my original plan. But if ever I build *another* house—"

That, however, is looking too far ahead. Even at the plan-drawing point, Pinxter is only in the incipency of the disease. There are several interesting phases to record before Pinxter gets where he is able to talk about "another house."

MOVING IN

AS I look out of my window, my eyes tempted from my work by the grateful sight of the Spring-time green, I see an imposing and dignified procession pass majestically, at a dignified rate of progress, along the highway. It is a procession of four gigantic vans, like small barns mounted on wheels. The vans are beautifully painted in the brightest and shiniest of carriage paint, and on their ample sides they bear pictures of mighty warehouses—warehouses of the reddest red brick imaginable, and of such vast dimensions that the perspective looks too good to be true. These vans are drawn by huge, well-groomed, handsomely caparisoned Percheron horses. Each van carries a crew of three or four sturdy-looking men. There is an air of well-to-do respectability about the whole outfit; and the great, tightly closed doors at the back of the vans give a suggestion of decent privacy and seclusion, which imply a proper respect for the goods and chattels of a home on the move.

Very presently the procession will stop at its destination, which is at a house where the sign "To Let" has just been removed, and the stal-

wart-looking men will jump down and open the great doors, and dive into the cavernous depths within; and in an incredibly short time, with a wonderful skill and precision, they will shift their bulky cargo of trunks and furniture from van to house, depositing every article according to directions, and being so obliging and pleasant about it all, and never breaking or scratching anything, that the delighted owner of the goods and chattels will give them twice as much beer-money as he had intended to. Then the doors will be closed again, the crews will mount to their perches, and the imposing procession will roll away along the pleasant, saloon-dotted road to the great city.

Now, this is all as it should be. It is a proper, orderly and economical way of performing a task whose difficulties and annoyances and general cussedness used, once upon a time, to drive strong men to drink and desperation. I am not the least inclined to sneer at the pageant; I only wonder, as I gaze, how a people who do more moving from house to house than any other race on the face of the earth, ever managed to get along without a system that saves so much discomfort, loss of property, petty annoyance and humiliation—yes, bitter, biting, cruel humiliation.

I sigh as I look back across the years and think of our own moving in—or, rather, moving out—from the city. Things were very different then. Nowadays these mighty vans roll upon

their errands of mercy from early Spring to late Fall; and even a comparatively humble family may do its moving with dignity and style, on the shortest notice. But when I moved here the tortures of May-day were still in vogue. The man who wanted to move had to hire his truckman long before he hired his house. Prudent people generally went to the truck-stands about the Christmas season, calculating on the genial influences of the time to soften even a haughty truckman's stony heart, and move him to throw a dollar or two off his price. People in whom the moving habit was highly developed used to hire their truckman from year to year; but up in Harlem, where no one ever keeps a house for two consecutive years, they used to sell options in truckmen.

The truckman whom I engaged was a genial, active, encouraging person with whom I drove my bargain in January. He promised to be on hand at six o'clock in the morning on the first of May, and he offered to turn up at four if I preferred that hour. I told him that I thought it was ostentatiously early, and that six would do. He had four or five trucks of a size that at that time was considered large; but in case they proved inadequate to the occasion he promised to bring his brother-in-law's one-horse wagon, to which said one horse was attached. He entered my name and address in his engagement book; and, for further surety, I made a point of passing that way about once a month and recall-

ing myself to his memory, and giving him one of my best cigars.

On the morning of the first of May we were all up and dressed at six o'clock and waiting for the truckman—my wife and I and our whole domestic staff, and my wife's eighty-two-year-old uncle, who would come in to help us move, and who had to be fed all day with light, unbreakable articles to potter around with. Even the baby was with us—at least, she was crying, and I suppose it was for the truckman. She had cried for every conceivable thing else already, and it didn't seem as if there were anything left to cry for except the truckman.

Six o'clock came, and seven, but no truckman. We sat around on trunks tied up with clothes-line, and discussed the chances of his having been bribed to desert us for the service of some millionaire. We hung out of the windows and strained our eyes to catch the approach of the army of chariots. Scores of truckmen passed, but ours came not. When it came to the point where my wife began to ask me whether I was sure I had given him the right address, I felt that the need of a temporary absence was clearly indicated, and I said I would go to the truck-stand and see what had become of my man. At nine o'clock I went. The truck-stand was a long way off, and the day was hot and sulky. When I got there I was a perspiring crucible of pent-up profanity. There was not a truck on the stand. The policeman told me that

my man had left early, but he could not say whether he had gone in my direction or not. He kindly advised me not to wait for him after twelve o'clock.

I went back to the house. I found the truckman there with his caravan. He explained that I had given him the wrong address; but he saved me from a lasting misunderstanding with my wife by adding that I gave him the wrong name. The truckman's manner had entirely changed. He had a contemptuous and commanding aspect; and there was the flush of pride upon his face. At least, I thought at the time it was pride. I tried to explain to him the ingenious scheme my wife and I had devised of apportioning the furniture of a given room, or set of rooms, to one particular truck. His manner was so abstracted and absent-minded that by the time I had got him to show any interest at all, his men had distributed the greater portion of the furniture among the various trucks, on an entirely inferior system of their own. He then told me that he had moved more families than I had ever seen, and requested me to keep my wife's uncle out of the hall-way unless I wanted somebody to let a feather-duster fall on him and kill him.

Most of the morning I spent in keeping the truckmen away from a little back hall where we had stowed away a lot of discarded furniture and household belongings generally, which we had given to an obliging junk-man, who had kindly

consented to take them away. It was quite an accumulation of legless chairs, broken-down kitchen furniture and worn-out bedding, and it included a number of those atrocities in the way of highly and cheaply decorated furniture and idiotic objects of ornamental intent which find their way into every household, even those that really mean well. Some of those truckmen would pass by an ebony bookcase six feet long without seeing it, and would hurl themselves upon that collection, and try their best to carry away a wash-pitcher without a handle or a foot-rest with a broken back. My unrelenting vigilance kept the assortment intact until the last truck was loaded; and then, in an evil hour, I turned my back for a few minutes. I had not counted upon the brother-in-law and his one-horse wagon. He arrived about this time, and, finding nothing else to make a load of, he took the whole disreputable-looking outfit and drove merrily away. By this time everything had been removed from the place; the servants, with the exception of the nurse, had been started off on an early train to our new suburban home, and my wife and I sat down to eat a bit of luncheon—on the floor. After luncheon I sat on the window-sill and smoked a pipe. My wife remarked that she was thankful that we had got out before the new tenants had begun to move in.

“We haven’t missed it by much,” I said; “for there are their trucks in the street. And do you remember, my dear, my telling you that

the way that this fool of a landlord was treating his tenants would result in lowering the character of the street? Now look out there at the furniture of these people who are going to move in here. Did you ever see anything so sickeningly cheap and utterly common? Why, it's hardly one remove from what you'd expect to find in a tenement house!"

My wife looked out of the window.

"Why, my dear, how *can* you?" she said.

"Well," I went on, "just look at it. Did you ever see such a lot of cheap, worn-out, poverty-ridden stuff to move into a nice, smart-looking house like this?"

"Why, dear," said my wife, "that's *our* furniture, and those are our trucks. They were loaded almost an hour ago, but they haven't started yet, and I *think* the men are all in the saloon on the corner."

By the time I had hurried the men out of the saloon, and started the caravan, it was too late to take the train by which we had meant to go out, and we found that there would be no other for three hours. There was nothing for it but to take another railroad to a larger town five miles nearer New York, and hire a carriage to ride the rest of the way. We rather liked the prospect, however, for we thought the ride would rest us, and that baby could take her nap in the carriage. But we had taken too cheerful and optimistic a view of the livery-stable accommodations of suburban towns, as we realized

when, an hour later, we found ourselves jogging over a dusty country road in an ancient two-wheeled herdic coach, drawn by a lame horse, and driven by an Irishman who had more time on his hands than he knew what to do with.

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We had just begun the ascent of a hill so long that it seemed to end nowhere in particular this side of the zenith, when I heard a sound of creaking wheels, and, looking up, I saw ahead of me a caravan of heavily-laden trucks; and a chill struck to my heart when I realized that the furniture on them was *our* furniture. It was no use my saying to myself that, as a matter of fact, our furniture was very good and comparatively new, and that all furniture looks at its worst in the process of moving. It seemed to me that I had never seen such a wretched, pitiful, worn, scratched, battered, faded and frayed collection of cheap and nasty household articles in the whole course of my life. That furniture had been very much admired by our visitors when each article stood on its proper end, and was kept up to the highest standard of domestic cleanliness. But with its backs and bottoms and wrong sides generally exposed to the public gaze, with its legs sticking up in the air, with the half of its castors jolted out, tied up with knotted shreds of rope, with pieces of worn counterpane stuffed here and there to prevent chafing, and with a thick coating of roadside dust all over it, it looked very much like the

outfit of an emigrant gang that had busted up in Kansas, and was coming home regardless of appearances. Just as we drew up even with it, one of the wagons gave a lift to a Polish Jew peddler with a bundle of second-hand clothing tied up in a red table-cloth. He stretched himself out on the top of the load, on something that I subsequently discovered to be the baby's crib, and assumed an air of easy proprietorship. I asked my driver to whip up, and he told me he would as soon as he got to the top of the hill. At the top of the hill we came to the town, and drove together down the principal residential street to my house. As we drew up, my wife grasped my arm convulsively and pointed to the front lawn. The servants had not yet arrived to open the house, having left the train, with the unerring instinct of their kind, at a station several miles away; and the brother-in-law of my truckman, being the lightest laden of the moving throng, had arrived an hour before anybody else, had deposited his entire load of *bric-à-brac* on the front lawn, and was now waiting to be paid.

It was the close of a beautiful May afternoon, and in the pleasant twilight a number of people were going home from the first tennis practice of a field club in the immediate vicinity. I saw at once that the place teemed with life and vivacity; and yet I did not feel entirely sure that I should not have preferred something more retired and secluded.

A WATER-COLOR HOUSE

THE Pinxters are really building. Indeed, they are quite a long way on in their troubles. There is no more drawing of plans on the back of envelopes: they are in bondage to a professional architect, and to a professional builder in league with a professional stone-mason. They are not the same lithe young things that they were a few months ago; but they know more.

First, Pinxter bought his lot. Then came a short period of rose-colored hope. As soon as he had got his deed, Pinxter became convinced that he had got the very best lot in the very best neighborhood of the very best town in the world, and he wondered at his own acuteness in doing it. Every afternoon when he came home from business Mrs. Pinxter and he wandered about that lot, feeling their ownership in the very soles of their feet. They visited it in all sorts of weather; they brought parties of friends to visit it. Pinxter never allowed any postponement on account of the weather. He asked everybody's advice about the proper location for the house. He and Mrs. Pinxter selected a number of possible sites and marked them out with stakes. They let their friends drive stakes, too. They

got so many stakes in the ground that after a while passers by used to stop and wonder what sort of a camp-meeting it could have been that was so free with its tent-pegs.

Then they had a great time deciding upon an architect; but when they did settle on their man, they were delighted to find that they had made exactly the right choice. They found him an uncommonly pleasant person. He let them tell him all their ideas—a practice in which their friends had not encouraged them much of late. He took the kindest sort of interest in the whole business; and he suggested all sorts of little comforts and conveniences which need not add at all to the expense if they were put in at the first instance, but which would be beyond the reach of wealth itself after the house was completed. They had thought at one time of dispensing with an architect, and building the house out of a book; and they shuddered as they thought that in that case they would never have known of all these delightful possibilities. Then the architect brought them a little water-color sketch—something he had dashed off to give them an idea of what he thought they would like. It represented a most charming little cottage, with a great many kinds of roof, and it had the most alluring dormer windows and round windows and lattice windows, and it had a pretty little porch with big benches at the side, and with a trellis with vines clambering over it. Then there was a lawn with flower-beds on it,

and a neat little driveway with a pony-phaeton standing at the door, presumably waiting for Mrs. Pinxter. Back of the house were stately trees, and a deep-blue sky hung over all, with fleecy white clouds upon its bosom. A little more and you could have heard the birds sing.

Of course that settled it. It is true that there were no trees on their lot; and that the architect had made no provision for drying clothes anywhere except in the back yard. But from the moment that Pinxter saw that picture their doom was sealed. Then came the estimates and contracts and specifications, and a very lucid and precise explanation of the system at first, second and third payments, and so on. This was the first jarring note in the lovely symphony of hope.

There were more jarring notes later on when it came to cutting down the estimates to fit the appropriation. They never thought, poor children, of cutting down on the external beauty of the cottage in the picture. The fancy windows, and the roofs with their valleys and peaks and gables and angles and what-not, and the ornamental porch, all cost money—a great deal of money; and yet it never once occurred to them that the one house that they best knew and best loved and admired was the simple, unpretentious old hip-roofed homestead where Mrs. Pinxter's mother lived, and where Pinxter had done his courting. There wasn't a fancy window in that building, and a ten-dollar bill

would have paid for all the tinsmith's work on the roof; but its simple, well-chosen lines had a home-like beauty that had endeared them to generation after generation.

No; the Pinxters made their architectural economies out of the needs of their domestic life. They cut down a foot on this room and six inches on that. They made their kitchen range so small that their joints of meat would have to be measured to fit the oven. They substituted cast-iron fixtures for brass, and they decided on a cheap grade of window glass. They agreed upon ready-made mantels and single floors; and they decided to go without a laundry, although they retained a butler's pantry that could not have been more commodious had they owned an ancestral butler. And they ordered for the bath-room a tub so short that Pinxter could only sit in it in the shape of a letter N, and take his morning bath in sections.

Then comes a hole in the ground in the middle of the lot; and then the masons begin to fill this with a stone lining, stopping short for the day every time that an April shower casts a two-minutes' sprinkle upon the earth. Then up goes a bewildering lot of hemlock framework before Pinxter has a chance to find out for himself whether it conforms to the plans or not.

About this time a chill comes over the cordial relations between the Pinxters and their architect. They begin to be disappointed in him. When they engaged him to superintend the con-

struction of their house they fancied him going merrily to his work with the earliest laborer, and watching over everything with an eagle eye until the setting sun released him from his important task. When they find that he makes an inspection about once a week, and then only exchanges a few friendly technicalities with the master mason, and asks him how soon he is going to start that next job down the street, they are surprised, grieved and indignant.

They appeal to the architect's friends to rouse him to a sense of duty, and to a realization of the great professional opportunity he is missing. It gives them a certain shock to learn that the architect had not calculated to support himself, his wife and a growing family, for a whole year on the \$250 that he is to make out of the Pinxter's job, and that he is erecting houses for several other people, and will erect more if he gets the chance. Later on they are better satisfied with him. He comes oftener and assumes a more active command of the work. But even then they find him a different man. They discover that very few of his brilliant suggestions have been incorporated in the plans and specifications. When they appeal to him to repair these omissions he tells them coldly that they ought to have seen to it before, and that if they want any alterations they must pay for them as extras. When Mrs. Pinxter tells him that the closet in her room is not large enough, he tells her that it is larger than any closet he

has ever built. When Pinxter finds out that he cannot put his Chippendale sideboard between the dining-room windows, he is told that a Chippendale sideboard wouldn't match the room, anyhow, and that he had better get another. Not room—sideboard. It does not take the Pinxters long to learn that the moving of a window two inches one way or the other will utterly destroy the whole artistic scheme of the architect—that is, after the contracts are once signed. After the contracts are once signed, architecture is always a delicate and fragile art, and should be dealt with reverently by people who cannot afford extras.

The Pinxters get this idea firmly impressed on their minds when they make what is termed a “kick” about the front stairs. They and their friends cannot see that a newel post about as big as the capstan of a man-of-war harmonizes with a lead-pencil rail and baluster. The architect stakes his professional reputation that the proportions are artistically correct. He also refers them to the undeniable fact that the dimensions are those given in the specifications, and that they ought to have objected before accepting the latter. It is of no use their saying that they didn't know that the structure would look like that when it was done. Neither did he. He is a young architect; and he has got to practice on staircases if he ever wants to get them right.

Pinxter is on his third payment now, I be-

lieve; and I, somehow, feel as if true delicacy ought to keep me from obtruding my society upon him unnecessarily. But I wonder with a friendly interest how he will come out of the game of house-building into which he has put his poor little stakes.

What will come to him from his speculation, undertaken in almost childish ignorance and inexperience? Will he get a cozy, comfortable little home that he will learn to love the more dearly as the days go by? or will he have a poor make-shift, misshapen habitation on his hands that will make him for years discontented at home, and envious under his neighbor's roof?

Who can tell? It is a mere chance either way. But do not blame poor Pinxter if he yielded to a natural weakness of human nature, and let a pretty picture of a pretty house tempt him to forget that a man builds the inside of a home for himself, and the outside for his neighbor across the way. How many of us are wiser? Did not the makers of fashion-plates long ago learn to make the woman in their costumes graceful and beautiful, and the men stately, tall and deep-chested? And, shall we blame the architect if he tries to set off his design with the attractions of ideal surroundings? No, indeed! If your wife goes shopping to buy a Winter wrap, does the head of the cloak department look among the saleswomen for one just as short and stout, or one just as tall and angular as his customer? No, no! He calls up a

young lady with a perfect figure and the carriage of a queen, and he drapes the garment over her faultless shoulders.

It is human nature all around, and that is why so many people are living to-day as the Pinxters will live until their house is finished, in a water-color picture of a dainty dwelling, enshrined in luxury and foliage, with a pony phaeton waiting at the door, and with a front-yard where a lawn is ever green under the perpetual green skies, and where, in trim beds, the springtide forcythia and the hardy Fall chrysanthemum blossom side by side in innocent and unconscious defiance of the laws of nature.

THE POINTERS

ON Summer Saturdays the Suburbanite hastens from town on the midday train; and Mrs. Suburbanite arrays herself in cool and dainty garments and goes out on the lawn to meet him. On other days of the week, when he comes home just in time for dinner, she meets him in the front hall and says: "Oh, is that you, dear? Hurry up and get ready for dinner, please, for your train is late to-night." But on Saturday she goes out on the lawn and says: "Oh, darling, I'm *so* glad you've come! I was so afraid you wouldn't get the train." I don't know what makes the difference, but I suspect that there is a good deal of swivel silk and French hat and fancy tan shoes about it.

And pretty soon the Suburbanite gets into *his* Summer bravery of white flannel and colored shirt, and, standing with Mrs. Suburbanite on his front steps, he looks up and down the pleasant street, comparing his lawn with his neighbor's. According to suburban etiquette, he must always praise his neighbor's lawn and speak slightly of his own; but in his heart of hearts he believes that his own is the best in sight. From this harmless and gratifying amusement he is startled by his wife's indignant voice.

"Oh, Henry!" she cries, "there's a lot of

those horrid Pointers coming up the road. They must have come out on the train with you."

"Gad!" says Henry, in deep disgust; "look at the pair of them over the way!"

On the walk at the opposite side of the street two people are slowly passing—a man and a woman. Though their dress proclaims them from the city, they loiter and gawk like country folk; and they stare at everything they see about them like people wandering through a waxwork show. The stare is sufficiently frank and undisguised and contemptuously careless enough to irritate a hippopotamus if it were directed at the thickest spot on his hide.

But the stare is forgotten—wiped into oblivion by what comes next. The male person of the pair extends his arm, points his forefinger straight in the direction of the modest front porch of Mr. and Mrs. Suburbanite, and demands of his companion:

"There! how do you like that one?"

The female person gives one brief glance in the direction indicated, and then replies in ringing tones of contempt:

"I think it's perfectly hideous! I wouldn't live in it if you gave it to me. Why, the little one with the red roof is better than that!"

They pass on down the street; but even when they have got as far as the corner their conversation is still audible to Mr. and Mrs. Suburbanite. The female person inquires in loud but languid tones:

“I wonder what sort of people live in a town like this, anyhow?” and the male responds, in clear and vigorous tones:

“Oh! pretty devilish common, I should think.”

Is it really possible that there are such people in the civilized world? Oh, yes; there are plenty of them, and they are not bad people at all. Indeed, they are not, at home, rude people, even. In the city they would never think of pointing their forefingers at a man's front door, and commenting upon the appearance of his dwelling in any way that would attract his attention,—nor do they mean to do so now and here. The unfamiliar scene, the novel distances, the sense of a wholly unfamiliar mode of life—all these things make them feel as though they were walking in a world in which they had no part, and they hardly feel at the first as if it were just as real an every-day life as their own. And then, the silence of the country cheats them into talking loudly, as it does every one.

For the rest, their intent is not at all offensive. They are simply “Pointers”—a married couple of moderate means, who, having some idea that they may, at some time, be obliged to move from the city to the country, have come out to look about them and see how they would like it on the whole.

It is all a matter of speculative unreality to them, and they no more think that they are seen and heard in their finger-pointing and too frank

criticism than—well, than you did, my dear Mr. Urban, when you did pretty much the same thing in a university town in Holland, where every second man on the street spoke English quite as well as you did.

The Pointer has all seasons for his own. He has been known to make his explorations in mid-winter, and I have encountered one cheerful soul who never went house-hunting in the country except on a day of genuinely mean rainy or snowy weather. He said that if you could see anything to like in a suburban town under such conditions, it must be a pretty good town when you came to try it dry and comfortable. That man, I believe, is still living in town. But, of course, late Spring, early Summer, and the first of the Fall are the chosen times of the Pointer—especially if he is a Pointer of limited means. It is always pleasant to take an afternoon stroll through a pretty country town; and this luxury the Pointer may enjoy at no greater cost than the railway fare for himself and his wife. For, if they arrive in the morning, they generally bring their luncheon with them in a paste-board box, and eat it in the railway station, to the great disgust of the station agent. That is, they do this when they are new beginners at the pointing game—Greenpointers, so to speak. Afterward they advance in knowledge of the possibilities of the game. And, after they have had their first free ride in a real estate agent's carriage, they begin to see that there is something

more in the pastime of pointing than trailing aimlessly around on foot and staring at the outside of other people's homes—or else, peeping furtively into the dismal interiors of empty houses. There are free rides in it; cakes and ale in it, free, too; and, more than this, there is consideration and respect and even deference and delicate flattery—undeserved, it is true; unearned, enjoyed only for a brief hour, and then on false pretenses—but sweet, sweet, sweet on the tongue while the taste lasts.

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For, sooner or later, there comes a Friday afternoon when the Pointer climbs to his airy flat with a lightsome step and a beaming countenance.

“My dear,” he says to his wife, “we’ll go and look at some out-of-town houses to-morrow, but this time we’ll go in style. I’ve struck a real estate man downtown, a man who’s interested in property at Howsonlotville, and he’s going to take us out to see the place. It won’t cost us even our fares; he puts up for everything, and when we get there he blows us off to luncheon at his own house, and in the afternoon he drives us all around, and shows us all there is to be seen. Great scheme, isn’t it?”

“But, my dear,” timidly remonstrates his wife, “is it quite right, do you think? You know we haven’t the least idea of going to Howsonlotville to live, and wouldn’t it be, somehow, like getting a good time on false pretenses?”

Then the Pointer explains to his wife that women don't know the first thing about business. This is entirely a matter of business with the real estate man. He takes such chances right along in the hope of getting his property known. It is simply an advertisement of his business—nothing else—just the way the grocer sends you a sample cake of soap or a can of some new brand of baking-powder. And in the end, of course, she says she supposes that he knows best.

From that day on their doom is sealed. A new era dawns for them. They travel out to Howsonlotville on the family ticket of the agent of the great Howsonlot estate. They accept of the agent's hospitable board, eat the excellent luncheon he has provided, show a refined appreciation of his good wine; talk casually and carelessly of their rich relations, and make incidental mention of horses they have owned. In the afternoon, perched high and proud on the agent's drag, they look down with a feeling of infinite satisfaction upon the less experienced Pointers wandering about on foot and unattended. Then they go and look at a house which they never in the world could afford to take; and condescendingly promise to give its merits their kind consideration over Sunday. This is not entirely duplicity; it sometimes takes quite a while to trump up an insuperable objection to a pretty good house.

Once embarked in this fascinating game, the

true Pointer never tires of pitting his ingenuity and evasive skill against the cunning of the real estate agent. Of course the ultimate fate of every gambler lies ahead of him. For a longer or shorter time he may enjoy free luncheons, free drives, and all the consideration which the real estate operator keeps on tap for his victims until he has them safe. But, be it soon or late, the day will surely come when he is cornered, when the compromising word is said, when he sees his name on an innocent-looking "memorandum of agreement"—and then it is all over before he knows it. The fatal Deed and the ravenous Bond and Mortgage are signed, sealed and delivered; his bridges are burnt behind him, he stands trembling and apprehensive at the beginning of a new life; and the Pointer has become the last thing that he ever meant to be—a Suburbanite.

THE FURNACE

WHEN I first moved into the country (I have told this story before; but only in the comparative privacy of the poetic form), I inquired for a suitable man to take charge of my furnace. One was recommended to me, and we opened negotiations, which were conducted warily on both sides; for each of us was wondering how much the other knew about a furnace, and each of us was conscious of plenty of ignorance to betray. Finally, the man asked me how much time I wanted him to devote to the furnace. Here I turned and rent him. I told him that if he were applying for the post of furnace tender, he ought to know how much time it was his duty to devote to that particular furnace. This disconcerted him, and he said that he had asked the question only because it had occurred to him that I might want him to stay with the furnace all day. I asked him why he should stay with the furnace all day, and he said: "To prevent its blowing up."

Now, in my simple city ignorance I supposed that that man was simply trying to impose upon me and to get a profitable job for himself; but I have since come to know that he merely reflected, in his uneducated, exaggerated way, the

attitude of all suburbanites toward that domestic Moloch, the Furnace.

The furnace is, for eight or nine months in the year, the heart of domestic life, and it may be said to feed the pulse of all suburban conversation. Even the question of domestic service has to yield to it in importance, as a topic; for you may, or you may not, at any given time, have a cook, but you *always* have a coal-bill.

Now, I wish to do all that lies in my power to reprehend this tendency. It not only imparts to suburban conversation an ashy and uninteresting flavor, but it spoils the furnace. Long experience has taught me, and I do not hesitate to affirm it, that furnaces are just like children—you can spoil them and set them all wrong in life by making too much fuss over them; by coddling and petting them; by paying attention to their little whims and fancies; and, above all, by talking about them to their faces in the presence of visitors and strangers. You all know how it is with children: if little Claribel is in the room, and you say to the lady who is visiting you:

“Oh, I don’t know what to do! little Claribel is so sensitive! Do you know, the other day she wept for five hours together because the cat killed a little bird on the lawn!”

Do you know what happens after that? Little Claribel’s one idea is to beat her own record for sensitiveness by weeping six hours over the next dead bird she finds; and if she can’t find

any other way of attracting attention and winning praise for her delicate susceptibilities, she will drop a tear on a deceased tumblebug, just to attract a moment's notice. In the same way, if you tell your visitor in the youngster's hearing, that your dear little Reginald has such a wonderful flow of spirits that it seems impossible for him to control himself—why, you must not be surprised if Reginald seizes the opportunity to kick his football through the parlor window, by way of showing the exuberance of his spirits, and the impossibility of restraining them. Well, you can spoil a furnace much in the same way as you can spoil a child.

Do not for an instant imagine that I began my suburban life with any superiority of knowledge over my neighbors—at least, so far as the management of a furnace was concerned. In many other respects I knew more than they did—although I am not using so much knowledge now. I treated my furnace with the same familiar indulgence and familiarity; and gave it just as absurd an idea of its own importance as did the most thoughtless of those about me. Many and many a time has that furnace heard me talking through the thin floor that separates the cellar from the ground story—telling of its ways and its fancies; of its extravagance in coal one week, and of its strict economy the next; of its entire unwillingness to work in an east wind, and its furious enthusiasm to roast the house every time there was a breath from the south. Be-

ginning that way, no wonder I turned the poor thing's head.

But this was only the least of the foolishness with which I encouraged that furnace to misbehave. I discharged the man whom I had first engaged to take care of it; not because I could find any real fault with him, but because he seemed to me to have no real sense of the seriousness of his responsibility. I thought he treated the furnace in a slighting and disrespectful manner; and I didn't like the way that he slammed the door after he had put the coal in. I hired a small boy to sleep in the house, so that he might be at the service of the furnace day and night. I can say for the boy that he carried out one part of his contract. He slept in the house.

It was I who went down late at night after I had got home from a dinner or a dance, or a trip to the city to hear the opera, and dove into the cellar to study the immediate needs of that furnace, drowsily summoning to my aid what small scraps of knowledge I possessed about draughts and heat-units and cold air supply—only in the end to stir up something or other, I didn't know why; to let down something, about the end and aim of which I knew still less; and to make some combination of dampers and slides and doors, for which I never in the world could have offered the slightest reason.

Of course, in my earlier suburban days, I was even more foolish in my treatment of my furnace. I took a number of plumbers down to

see it, and consulted with them—one at a time, of course,—in its very presence. Each one laid out for me a different set of rules by which to work it, and explained to me a different set of principles which governed each set of rules. You could not have told them from so many doctors. At first, too, I showed the furnace to friends of experience and to distinguished strangers who occasionally honored my humble roof. On one occasion I took down a distinguished poet, a scientist of wide reputation and a man who had recently invented a ten-cent puzzle; and this overdose of glory and dignity was quite too much for the furnace. It would not draw for the next three weeks, and it gave out very little more heat than the refrigerator.

The furnace did not improve as the years went on; and the members of the household learned with each successive twelve-month to rely more and more upon open fires and upon a gradual toughening process that went on from September to April, and that made an indoor temperature of fifty degrees Fahrenheit bearable, if not, perhaps, enjoyable. Then there came a day—a happy day—when the owner of the furnace asserted himself. It was a mild January day of a Winter which I had begun by laying in twenty tons of coal for the consumption of that furnace. The boy came up to tell me that they were consumed. He was not the first boy who had made of his young energies a burnt offering to my furnace; he was only one

in a long succession. When I heard from his lips that the coal was all gone; and when I reflected that the chilly annoyances of the Winter were to be succeeded by the cruel inclemencies of Springtime, I was bitterly angered; and for the first time in my experience I went down into the cellar, conscious of an angry and unkind feeling toward my furnace.

The boy had spoken truth: yet not all the truth. The twenty tons of coal had vanished from the bin, and now, slightly charred, formed a large portion of what was supposed to be a pile of ashes, in a lonely region of the cellar. One door of the furnace was broken, another had lost its hinge; and a huge crack rent its fire-pot half way through. I gave my orders sternly and precisely. The food for the furnace was no longer to be purchased in twenty-ton lots. It was to be fed from hand to mouth: ton by ton at a time. No plumber was to heal its gaping wounds—and I was never to hear one solitary word about it until the Summertime should come, when I could tear it out and sell it for old iron, and put some more modern device in its place.

That was six years ago, and all is changed since then. That day the furnace learned its lesson: in bitterness of spirit, I have no doubt; but faithfully and fully. Never since then have I had to contend with it. Perhaps its duties are not performed in absolute cheerfulness of mind; but so long as it locks up its discontent

in its breast and locks no clinkers there, I shall not complain. A dull and sullen servant it may be, but so diligent and loyal and steady that I try to shut my eyes to the fact that the crack in the fire-pot is steadily widening; and that before long the companion of many days and nights of suburban solitude and solicitude will be loaded on a truck, and will be borne dangling and clanging away from its home to lie in some riverside junkyard and rust itself redder than it ever would fire up for me.

In the meantime it patiently eats and turns to good account, short rations of coal, grudgingly doled out to it, too often from the sifted ash-heap.

THE TIME-TABLE TEST

ONCE upon a time, in the days of my young and green suburbanity, I served on some society for the improvement of everything in general; and I was appointed a committee of one to call upon the residents of a certain street and find out how they were disposed toward some project the society had in hand. I was appointed, I suppose, because I knew hardly any one in that particular quarter. In fact, I knew but one man, and him very slightly. So, as I knew that he was a man of wealth and reputation, I thought I would save myself trouble by calling on him only, and letting him voice the sentiment of his district.

Mr. Banker was out, but Mrs. Banker received me graciously, and even treated me with a certain affability until I told her my mission. Then her manner underwent a change. She said she thought Mr. Banker was in favor of the project, but that she knew nothing of the other people of whom I inquired. I said that I had thought Mr. Banker would be able to tell me something about the probable attitude of his next door neighbor, Mr. Smallsales. Mrs. Banker did not think, however, that Mr. Banker would be likely to possess any information as to the views of Mr. Smallsales. I then suggested that Mr.

Banker might at least be able to tell me how Mr. Pettycash, across the way, might happen to stand on the subject. Mrs. Banker was very sure that Mr. Banker could do nothing of the sort. I named several other residents of the neighborhood, but in every case Mrs. Banker was confident that Mr. Banker could not possibly be acquainted with the gentleman's opinions. The coldness of her tone increased with every inquiry; and at last it became so disapprovingly chilly that I meekly rose to retire, wondering wherein I had offended.

Mrs. Banker saw my confusion, and she relented sufficiently to afford me a hint of enlightenment. With a severe, though pitying rebuke, conveyed in voice and manner, Mrs. Banker drew herself up majestically and said, icily looking over my bowed head:

"We have not had the pleasure of having you long in the town, Mr. Sage, and you probably do not know that Mr. Banker *never* goes in earlier than the 10:17!"

In one instant I recognized the vast social gap which separated the husband of my hostess from poor Smallsales who "went in" on the 7:27. Blushing for my obtuseness, I went home and resigned from the society. I told the president that I thought I was too new in the suburban field for active work; and when he said that it was only the new men who ever would do any active work, I **knew** that I was right.

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It was this incident, I think, that first led me to find diversion in studying the humors and humanities of the Children of the Time-table. There is an upper window in my house that commands an uninterrupted view of the little railway station, and it is a daily pleasure for me to stand there and watch our little suburban world going to business. We are all slaves of the bell: they of the locomotive-bell, and I of the one that jingles in a corner of the typewriter, and keeps tab of the lines as they crawl along.

I have got so now that if I were to wake up out of a sound sleep, look out of that window and see so much as the back of a man, or even the top of his hat—there is a good deal of expression in hats—going to the train, I could tell you instantly what train it is, whether it is the man's regular train or not—and more or less why he is taking it.

There is no affectation or self-consciousness about the men who go into New York on the very early trains. Life is too serious a matter to them, and too dull a matter; and it holds no bright possibilities. On the first six o'clock train or on the second six o'clock train they go in; and on the first six o'clock train or on the second six o'clock train they will go in until the time comes for another journey which will not involve their getting up so early. Perhaps there are some among them who might ease their weary lives and work themselves up a

train or two; but as this would involve the execution of several extra licks of work, I do not think that it is at all likely.

It is the first train after seven o'clock that brings forth the passenger to whom the timetable assumes the appearance of an ascending social scale. He is only an office-boy at present. If he is employed by a very large commission house, rating at A1 or A2 in the books, he may be called a junior clerk; but even in that case his duties are the same, and his pay is likely to be less. His companions on his townward trip all occupy similar positions, and he knows them all and greets them with airy familiarity. They skylark noisily on the platform, and behave just as much like college boys as they dare to. They have to put some restraint upon themselves, however, for the neighboring commuters are jealous of their rest. And, while they are accustomed to stand a great deal of noise from locomotives, they naturally draw the line at boys.

The 7:03 train is a pleasant sight to watch, as it begins to puff on its way, for even if the boys do show off a little they are genuinely happy and full of the joy of life; and I like to see them scramble up the steps like young monkeys. But the 7:27 train is quite another affair.

The errand-boy has got his promotion. He is really a junior clerk of some sort; and he has the glorious privilege of getting to his

office exactly twenty-four minutes later. But, with his first step upward, he leaves light-hearted boyishness behind him and becomes a prey to cankering ambition. His companions are men now, but mostly men who have barely escaped the bondage of the 6:38, and in whose breast the hope of ever rising even to the 8:01 is slowly dying out. There is no companionship among them, for they all hate the doubtful limbo in which they are placed; and those who may get out of it despise those who never may, while the latter hate the former with all the cordiality of a healthy human envy. It needs only a glance to tell a 7:27 man. He appears long before train time, and he hurries along and casts furtive glances up and down the street, fearful that some 8:01 man may be ostentatiously loafing around his garden, flaunting to the world his thirty-four minutes of superiority.

And yet the 8:01 man—that is, the regular every-day 8:01 man—is not a happy creature. It is true he puts a bolder face on as he goes to the station, and assumes a jauntier carriage. He cultivates an air of being extremely fond of early rising; and he sniffs the morning breeze with such an affectation of enjoyment that he sometimes awakens late sleepers under whose windows he may chance to pass. But his arrogant pretenses desert him when he gets to the station. There you see him glance nervously about, anxiously seeking for some 8:48 man who has been forced by an exceptional emer-

gency to take an earlier train. Him he will pursue and catch, and fasten on him with the grip of death; and he will not be shaken off. The 8:48 man has business on his mind; he has got up three-quarters of an hour before his usual time—and every morning minute counts with the suburban commuter—and he is sleepy and cross, and his breakfast is sitting crosswise on his stomach. But the 8:01 man will stick by him, and walk up and down the platform with him, and nod loftily to his regular companions, as though he, too, were one of the favored children of fortune who usually took the train of the day.

For, of course, the 8:48 is the train of the day. WE take it—the WE that is WE in every suburban town—oh! too often most tiresomely WE, and most unkindly nobody else. The passing of the 8:48 train is decidedly a social function. The men approach it by twos and threes, never hurrying, but with an air of elegant leisure that may have taken ten or fifteen minutes in preparation. They are all spick and span in their clothes: for a commuter's clothes improve from train to train until he gets to taking the 10:17, when he is reputed so rich that he may safely dress shabbily. There is always a crowd at this train, and many ladies take it who could much more conveniently go in later. There is a great deal of tipping of hats and shaking of hands in the latest imported style; and, altogether, you would think that the

people assembled on the little platform had come together to go to a meeting of the Fourhundred Hunt, instead of going to New York to make money downtown or spend it uptown—and no great money at either end.

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I saw a perfectly happy man the other day. It was my friend Pettycash. For many years, Summer and Winter, he has served the 7:27 train faithfully and unfailingly. The other day he came into his old aunt's money, and he promptly resigned his clerkship. He told his wife that for a few days before he entered on the management of the estate he would stay at home, and they would have a splendid time together, looking over the garden and figuring out what the house needed in improvements. But on the very first day of his freedom he surprised and disappointed her immediately after breakfast by telling her that he had forgotten something in town which he ought to attend to, and that he positively must go in. He tried to placate her by offering to do an errand for her; but I think that only aroused unjust suspicions in her mind. She need not have been troubled, however. He only wanted to take the 10:17 train, and he took it. I happened to be at the station, where the train was delayed for a few minutes, and I saw him roaming uneasily from car to car, although it has been his invariable custom to travel in the smoker. But

when I saw him at last settle himself in the forward car, just in front of the great Mr. Banker, and begin, with an air of indolent ease, to read an illustrated paper, I knew just how he felt.

THE SOCIETY CHURCH

“**V**ERY pleasant people, I have no doubt, my dear. In fact, I have heard that Mrs. Chasuble met them and thought them very agreeable, indeed. But I really don't know anything about them, myself. They don't belong to *our* church, you know!”

Do not imagine, my startled friend, that good Mrs. Burrage is speaking in an un-Christian spirit when she answers thus a newcomer's question about some resident of older date. There is not a hint of un-Christian spirit in Mrs. Burrage. She has the highest respect for the people of whom she speaks; her manner is most cordial to them when she meets them here, and I am sure it will be even more cordial when she meets them in heaven after the burden of her social responsibilities shall have rolled off her much-tried suburban back. In speaking as she does, she is simply asserting the right of her own beloved church to call itself the Society Church of the town. She and other earnest workers have won for it that distinction; not by zealous religious effort—for she knows no more of the doctrines of her church than she knows of the doctrines of Confucius—but simply by good, solid, indefatigable financiering.

What has she not done—what has she not

gone through, to attain that much-desired end? She has wrung gold out of rocks, silver out of stone, and nickel and copper out of the very pebbles and dust. She has coaxed and cajoled and wheedled well-to-do home-seekers into settling in our town; and she has lured their wives and daughters from other folds by an extravagance in the way of social entertainment which has driven Burrage almost to the verge of distraction. He told me that he completely wore out one dress suit while Mrs. Burrage was getting the church-spire built; and that he worked a hole in his new trousers over a series of dinners which she gave to rope-in some people who hadn't subscribed to the font.

For the rock on which the suburban Society Church rests is, I am afraid, a rock of gold-bearing quartz that has little likeness to the rock on which Peter founded *his* church. I do not mean to say, or even to hint, that the church, as a church, is not all that a church should be in the way of disinterested and devoted spirituality. I should not presume to bear testimony upon such a point. I am only speaking of the church as the dominant social organization of the town, to point out that it attained that proud position—or, as the vulgar say, “got there”—because its congregation had the most money and the best workers.

The opposition church—we have a number of churches in our town, but only two of what you might call the first magnitude—thought it

had done a very clever thing when it got its corner-stone laid; covered up with a neat little wooden box, and left to await the growth of a building fund to visible proportions. Little the congregation of that church knew Mrs. Burrage. She laid her corner-stone later, it is true, but in it she put attested copies of all the builders' contracts, and of the guarantees of fifteen well-to-do citizens to pay for the construction of the edifice up to the roof-line. It may have been this move; or it may have been her chartering a freight-train, decorating it with flowers and green things, and running a church-fair on wheels the whole length of our section of the railroad—but one way or another victory perched on her banners. People said that the freight-car church-fair was undignified and even irreverent; but it was a glittering success; and, in the end, there was the beautiful little brown-stone church to show for it, on the best corner lot in the best quarter of the place. And when the new-comer in town looked around him and saw that church and the other churches, and the weather-beaten box, rain-streaked and gray, that sheltered the corner-stone of the opposition church, it is small wonder that he (or his wife) promptly exchanged the religious convictions of his (or her) ancestors for the social convictions of Mrs. Burrage.

I have not told you what particular church it is for which Mrs. Burrage has struggled so hard; but I may say that in most suburban

towns the struggle is apt to lie between the Episcopalians and the Presbyterians. The Presbyterians have the most money and the Episcopalians have the most skill. I suppose that all the churches are equally capitalized in respect to Christianity; but when it comes to cash capital, these two denominations loom up like lighthouses. The Methodist Church is rich in spots, and the Congregational Church of New England has a few well-provisioned outposts; but if you want to see a real good, lively tussle for the possession of the top place in a new town, you want to see an Episcopal congregation and a Presbyterian congregation tackle each other for blood.

The struggle is rarely a long one. The first stone church up gets the prize. There is no gainsaying that sure and certain proof of certain financial superiority. It is the Stonechurchites henceforward who will build the finest clubhouse, organize the largest entertainments, and set the social key for the whole town—deciding whether the majority shall go in for athletics or for intellectuals; for the higher culture or for fashionable frivolity. If the Presbyterians get the inside track, the town is sure to get the higher culture, and will probably come in for athletics; but it doesn't stand a ghost of a show for frivolity. If the Episcopalians get there, the fashionable frivolity and the athletics (of a mild sort) are quite safe; but there is absolutely no chance for the intellectualities of the higher

culture: the idea of an Episcopalian's needing to know any more than he naturally does know being too preposterous to consider.

Let me say here that although my range of observation has covered, by-and-large, a dozen small towns of this country-side, I have never seen one instance where defeat, in a fight of this sort, was not accepted loyally and bravely. If the Presbyterians are conquered, they simply screw the armor of sanctity a little tighter, and move among their neighbors as stern old Puritans might have moved amid Papists and mummers in the days of the second Charles. If the Episcopalians lose the game, they simply smile a pitying smile of amused tolerance, and the vestryman's wife says to her guests:

"Oh, no, my dear! you mustn't expect anything in the way of gayety here, you know. This is the very stronghold of Presbyterianism; and we poor idolators are quite looked down upon. There are only enough of *us*, you know, for two or three tables at whist, and I'm afraid that our good neighbors think we are very shocking people."

Yet it must be very hard. Of course everybody discounts the fact that nine out of ten of the newcomers in town will have neither religion nor politics until they find out which is the fashionable church, and which is the party with the normal majority. But it must be trying to the Shepherd when his best ewe lambs begin to stray from the fold.

Here is the case of Mrs. Chedby, for instance. Her pastor met her on the street the other day, and remarked:

"I have not had the pleasure of seeing you lately, Mrs. Chedby." (In church understood.)

"No," says Mrs. Chedby, a little pinkish, but with the air of one who has prepared herself for the fray: "you see, Mr. Chedby's mother is visiting us, and she's *such* an ardent Stone-churcharian, you know, and counts *so* much upon never missing a service; and being nearly eighty, you know, I really *had* to go with her. And I'm sure, much as it is that I miss there, it's been a great comfort to me to be a help to the old lady, finding her places in the prayer-book. It came quite easy to me, of course, for my mother was an Episcopalian, you know."

Yes, he knows; the poor pastor knows. And he knows that her father was a hard-shell Baptist; and he knows that if she were to go to Paris to-morrow her grandparents would turn out to have been Roman Catholics. And he knows that she is slipping—slipping—slipping away from him.

A little before the end of dear Mama's visit, Mrs. Chedby "gets at" Mr. Chedby to induce him to go to church once in a while—just for the look of it. That question having been settled for ten years or so, Mr. Chedby does not understand her at all. Then he thinks she wants more money. When he finds she doesn't, he becomes a little worried about her health, and

privately asks the doctor if women ever get "nutty" from going to church too much. Finally he begins to dimly perceive that she has some object in view which she means to keep to herself. He waxes wroth. He lays back his ears and stubbornly refuses. She pleads with him for his mother's sake.

"You know, my dear, she hasn't said one word about it since she's been here, though I'm sure it's a grief to her, you're not going. Your father *always* did, you know. Now, if you'd only go once, just once, to please her, and I promise you I won't ask you another time. You know, dear, you may *never* see her again."

Finally Chedby compromises to the extent of one solitary service, and Mrs. Chedby reminds him of his promise the moment he opens his eyes on the beautiful Sabbath morn. It is well she does, for it is no trifling job to get Chedby off to church. In the first place, he is a man who spends most of his waking hours in a cheviot shirt, for he is an electrical engineer of renown, and he is the superintendent for this region of some great company that is scarring this fair country with trolleys and power-houses, and all manner of evil inventions; and most of Chedby's time is spent in driving furiously hither and thither in a sulky with a bottom like a big yellow soap-dish.

He swears profusely as he struggles with his collars and cuffs, alone in his little dressing-room. Mrs. Chedby, in the next room, hears

him; but she rebukes him only with a gentle "Hush!" He swears still more every time that he looks out of his dressing-room window, and his eye lights on his little workshop in the garden, where for so many years he has spent his Sunday mornings, peacefully tinkering away at his inventions and improvements and contraptions generally; for Chedby is a mechanical genius on his own hook—I wish he would make himself a lawn-roller.

However, he has got ready at last, and is steered into the church-going throng on the highway, red in the face, and suffering much in the region of the collar. He gets redder yet as he hears low whistles of surprise and incredulity from passing golfers and bicyclers; but with his eyes firmly fixed upon the prayer-book, which he grasps with perspiring fingers, he marches on behind his womenfolk. At church he gets along pretty well through the service; although Mrs. Chedby has to take his silk hat away from him two or three times, because he will play a tattoo on the crown. In the first of the sermon he fidgets, then he calms down into a state of absolute abstraction, and Mrs. Chedby knows by his drumming on his knees with his finger tips and puckering his lips as if he were going to whistle, that he is deep in mathematical calculations. In fancied security the good lady folds her arms and begins to study Episcopalian styles in sermon-hearing attitudes. The clergyman draws the main argu-

ment of his discourse to an end with one of those sweeping, triumphant questions which are only asked because there isn't any answer to them; and Mr. Chedby, dimly conscious in his mathematical depths of an interrogative pause, gives a loud, absent-minded snort of assent. A little titter titters around; Mrs. Chedby flushes crimson, and the Rev. Mr. Lilymouth turns the pinkest he can, and reads the rest of his sermon as if it were an auctioneer's catalogue.

But Chedby has served his turn. The paths of the two congregations cross each other; and Mrs. Chedby takes good care that her old pastor shall see her turn-out.

"Oh, yes," she will say to him later, when he makes his hopeless remonstrance; "I got into the habit of going when Mr. Chedby's mother was here, and Mr. Chedby showed so much interest in going to his old church again; and I knew he wouldn't go by himself; and as the children are to be brought up in that faith, *anyway*, and as both Mr. Chedby and his mother felt so *strongly* about it, it didn't seem to me as though I ought to consider myself. And of course it would have been different, in a way, if dear Mama hadn't been a Church-of-England woman!"

And when he hears the "dear Mama" and the "Church-of-England woman" the poor Shepherd knows that the brand of the other flock is on his ewe lamb.

THE SUBURBANITE AND HIS GOLF

ONE day last Summer, Mygatt called on me at about five o'clock in the afternoon. I saw from the evening paper in his hand that he had just come from the train; and I wondered a little at this, for he is a regular man in his goings and comings, and my house is well out of his way. With an air that was at once mysterious and diffident, he asked if he might look at my encyclopedia. I took him to the library and asked him what volume he wanted. He seemed uncertain about it, and something in his manner suggested to me that he wanted to be left alone. I strolled out upon the verandah, and I had not sat there long before Hix came in at the gate. He, too, wanted to look at my encyclopedia. I was about to tell him that Mygatt was at that moment looking at it, when, glancing over my shoulder, I saw that the library was empty, and that one of the volumes was missing from the big leather-bound set. Mygatt must have slipped out of my own back door of retreat, and I could not but infer that he had his own wishes for having his errand kept private. I told Hix I would

go with him to the library as soon as my smoke was finished, and I got him to sit down by me on the side farthest from the door, and smoke until Mygatt should have had a chance to cover his retreat. In the meantime I asked Hix if I could be of any service to him in his researches. At first he didn't think I could, and then he hemmed, hawed, and finally blurted out:

"Why, it's this way, Sage: I want to look up something about an English game that they call golf or goff, or something like that; and I guess I'll have to get you to help me, for I'm hanged if I know how to spell the blamed thing."

"Oh!" said I, much relieved; "is that what you want?" A hasty glance showed me that Mygatt was gone, and his volume was back in the book-case. I led my guest to the old red cherry book-case in the hall, that enshrines the sporting library of the family for several generations—a curious collection that ranged from Izaak Walton, by way of Mr. Sponge's Sporting Tour, to the Baseball Guide of the current year. Here I hunted up two or three recent works on golf which I had to read in boning up for a *Quarterly* article on "The Specific Moral Influence of Certain Assorted and Selected Forms of Physical Exercise;" and I was just simple enough to give him a condensed account of what I had boned up. I thought Hix looked a little frightened at the books; but he took the thinnest one of them and departed, thanking me more warmly than seemed necessary. As I went

back into the library, I could not help noticing that Mygatt had not put his volume back properly. I pulled it out, and the book split itself open at the pages headed—

GOLDSMITH
GOLF

GOMER
GOMPHIASIS

It did not require any great sagacity to put the one two and the other two together; but I felt pretty sure of my guess, when, late the next night, just as I was closing my book to go to bed, a man who had not crossed my threshold for two years slipped stealthily in on me and said:

“Oh, Sage, they tell me you’re a great authority on the new game they call garf. Would you mind telling me something about it? Pretty much the same thing as shinny, isn’t it?”

.

I was away from home for a few weeks in the latter part of the Summer. The first night that I got home Hix and Mygatt came to see me. It was the hottest September night, I think, that I ever remember; but those two dear simians wore heavy tweed suits, hand-me-down cloth caps that fell over their noses, and golf stockings an inch thick, with a diamond pattern on them, in a ghastly orange that somehow suggested a dish of fried eggs gone astray.

They told me that they wanted me to play golf; that it was the greatest game on earth;

and that I did not want to lose an hour in making myself acquainted with its mysteries.

"I suppose," said Mygatt, "you think it's something like shinny. Most people do. But it's not, in the least. You see, it's this way—"

"Hold on!" interrupted Hix; "you let me explain to him. I've shown so many people I've kind of got the hang of it. Maybe he's heard something about it, anyway. You've heard of the game, haven't you, Sage? G-O-L-F—You must have seen something about it in the papers."

"My dear," inquired Mrs. Sage, when I had toiled upstairs that night, an hour or two later, "what on earth were those men talking to you about all this while?"

"Golf," I said, wearily.

"What!" cried Mrs. Sage, indignantly; "not that ridiculous game that they've been trying to get us to play all this time up at Seacaddie?"

"I am afraid, my dear," I said, "it is the very same."

.

Now, I am not going to say anything against golf; and I do not doubt that to the unfortunates of Lenox and Tuxedo, idle and incapable of intellectual enjoyments, it must be, indeed, a precious boon. But to the plain suburbanite of modest means it is nowhere in interest to the game the conductor plays making holes in his commutation ticket.

I think that perhaps the golf enthusiasts might have made better progress in their great mission, had they not too early in the day let out the fact that there is more golf played off the grounds than on them—in fact, that it is a great ferry-boat and station-platform game.

In the beginning, Hix and Mygatt and the rest of them took turns at carrying broken golf clubs into the city, and expatiating on the delicate points of the instrument.

“Best mashie I ever had,” one announces, as if he had been brought up with mashies. “I got it the day I got that craigenputtoch and that gloomer—you know, Hix?”

“Little bit like my stymie-boddle, isn’t it?” inquires Hix.

“No,” says Mygatt, judicially; “I think you will find it has a little more whoof on the wimsie side—just a thirty-second of an inch, maybe; but that’s what does it.”

And they all agree that that is what does it; and they tell stories about strikes they have made and they haven’t made, so long, and so specific, and so utterly pointless and uninteresting that they would turn a trout-fisher green with envy.

An indiscreet excess of this sort of thing led to a chilly, suspicious feeling about golf in the more active athletic circles of our town. Members of the baseball team went down to the golf-links, watched the proceedings for a half-hour or so, and then demanded:

“Say, when are you fellows going to quit practice and call the game?”

This treatment so irritated the golfites that they worked themselves into a sort of religious fury of enthusiasm. They ravaged the town for converts. Men, women and children were torn from happy homes and forced to swing deformed war-clubs in the air, and to pound the inoffensive earth. Brasseys and craigenputtochs were thrust into the trembling hands of age, and even innocent childhood was not exempt. The church itself was invoked to exert its powerful influence; and the Rector obligingly went around saying to recalcitrants: “What! not play golf? I thought *everybody* did!” It must have looked that way to him Sunday mornings—for the Church of England, you know, golfs on Sunday with perfect propriety.

But somehow all this was of no avail. The game enjoyed a sort of hectic prosperity during the latter days of Fall, when there was very little else to be done out-of-doors; but the snow buried it for the Winter; and when it was brought forth again in the Spring, only a handful of sneezing devotees gathered in the cause. The practice games for the tennis openings diminished even this number; and when the baseball season opened, the first swing of the bat knocked golf galley-west.

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When the crusade was at its hottest, I was

dragooned, against my natural instincts, into buying a pair of crazy-quilt stockings an inch thick, and a couple of crooked sticks with fool names to them. The stockings were a good investment, as I find on chilly days; but I never knew what to do with the sticks until Mygatt, who had made me buy them, moved into my neighborhood. Then I painted red spots on them, fixed them up with leather ears and bristling manes, which I had made out of an old hair brush, and gave them to my two youngest children for hobby-horses. Mygatt has to pass my door twice a day, and every time I see him watching those children with eyes of horror, and shuddering at the desecration, I feel that those sticks are earning an honest penny for the first time in their crooked lives.

THE SUBURBAN DOG

THERE is a small, sweet patch of silence that comes over the suburban night just as it is turning into morning. There is no other really silent period in all the stretch between bed-time and get-up time. A man never realizes with what a variety of animal life he is surrounded, until he lies awake one Summer night in the suburbs. It will be borne in upon him, in the course of that experience, that between the moo of the calfless cow and the buzz of the sleepless mosquito, there is as large a choice in nocturnal noises as the most exacting could demand.

But, for this little space, there comes a silence so profound that it occasionally wakes me up. It did the other day, and I did not try to go to sleep at once, but lay still for a while, drinking in the charm of it.

The stillness was perfect. Even the little birds in the vines had let up on their sawfiling lullabies; and there was not enough wind to move the leaves in the tree-tops. For ten minutes the spell lasted, and then, far, far away, in a distant street, I heard the opening and shutting of a house-door, and my ear faintly caught the sound of a heavy, regular foot-fall on the hard macadam.

“Ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh!”

It was only the engineer at the mill, going to his daily work, and I knew it, and the dogs knew it; but it made no difference to the dogs.

“Ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh-ruh!”

It might have been a college yell, but it wasn't; it was the real thing. Somebody's dog had seized the chance to be smart. Then another one answers him—a querulous little kiyi, who goes:

“Rih-rih-rih-rih-rih!”

Then a big hound comes in with a heavy bay—

“Roo-roo-roo-roo-roo!”

Then a lady-dog somewhere comes in with a hysterical yelp, telling the world that her nerves are all unstrung, and that it gave her a terrible start to be waked up so suddenly, and what is the matter, anyway? Then there is a vague dog, who must live somewhere where he is not in the habit of seeing things; and he barks in a doubtful, inquiring way, as if he had done a good deal of barking in the course of his life, and had never seen any particular good come of it. Then there is a peculiarly offensive dog who yaps so shrilly and persistently and penetratingly that I know he cannot be much over six inches long, and the kind of dog that would run away from a rubber-doll.

One by one they all come in. Under my window two familiar dog-voices break forth—the bass of my big dog and the treble of my little one. On sweeps the chorus in every key and cadence; and I know that the spreading ripple

of melody will not die out until it has reached the confines of the town. It does not last long—five minutes, perhaps—and then it subsides all of a sudden. One low cur, who must have jack-ass blood in him, tries to get up an encore, but it doesn't go.

A nuisance? Well, perhaps. But it is a nuisance that goes with the dogs; and, so far as I can judge, from the volume and extent of that chorus, it has not deterred one single person in town from keeping dogs. But it is totally unnecessary. Why do they do it?

Purely as a matter of sentiment. That is their way of reminding us that they still cling to the old title of service by which they earned the right to share men's homes, and to be the companions of men. The barking simply says:

"Here we are, you see; not wanted at present, but just as ready to warn you of danger and to fight for you as the best of our forefathers. We know that it is all right just now; we don't even get up to bark; we just lie here and wag our fat tails, but we're here—oh! we're here!"

Very foolish, you think. Well, perhaps so; but there are four or five old gentlemen right here in this State of New Jersey who meet once every year in a remote town in the woods, and go through certain legal formalities to assure the myriad house-owners of the State that they, the old gentlemen, are still the Proprietors of New Jersey—which they are, indeed, by right of succession, although the original grant has dwindled

to a few pine-barrens. Now, either there is a good deal of human nature about a dog, or—we will let it go at that.

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I suppose it must be confessed that the suburban dog is, as a rule, a job lot. His owner, of course, affects to see signs of blood and lineage about him; but his owner's neighbors call him a mongrel cur, and as his past is generally hazy, perhaps the neighbors size him up rightly. Once in a while you find an inexperienced suburbanite who is rash enough to pay good money for a real canine aristocrat, but he never repeats the experiment. To keep the noble beast from contaminating associations with the lower orders, he has to be cooped up in a cage or pen, and taken out to walk at the end of a leash. Under this treatment the animal pines, and becomes a burdensome object of compassion. Veterinaries, amateur and professional, work over him with no better effect than to increase his depression of spirits. Finally he takes hold of the case himself, breaks out of the cage one fine night, and is not seen again for a couple of weeks, when he returns home with every sign of having led a highly disreputable life. His escapade cannot be concealed from a censorious world. In fact, complaints of his uninvited visits come from dog-owners near and far, and in the end, he is given to the farmer who makes the most fuss over his claim for damages.

But in the case of the average dog, he is either given, or he gives himself. Some dogs lead a varied and unsettled life, involving a constant repetition of both processes. A. moves to town and gives his setter pup to B. Setter pup doesn't like B., and goes and inflicts himself upon C. C. won't have it, and passes the dog over to D. The dog runs away every chance he can get, and goes back to C. That makes D. mad, and he tells C. to take his wretched pup back. C. goes to E. and labors hard with him to take the dog. E. finally consents, and then it is discovered that the dog has established himself in the household of F., from whence he will probably be ejected as soon as he exposes the objectionable ways that he has picked up in the course of his many changes of ownership.

But whatever may be the ultimate fate of this dog, he will for the rest of his days carry around his affections, not in a solid chunk, but cut up into sections, like a closely divided pie. From A. to F.—or to Z., if he lasts long enough—he will feel that he has a dropping-in acquaintance at every house; and not one of all the people through whose hands he has passed will ever get wholly rid of him, except C., who, having had more trouble than anybody else with the animal, may have found some clear and comprehensible method of expressing his feelings on the subject.

I feel somewhat conscience-stricken for having given this instance to the world, as I look out

of my window and see the flock of innocent, harmless and wholly unobjectionable dogs reposing on my lawn and the neighborhood lawns—it is the very hottest of the day, and they *are* quiet for a while. There are red and black setters, and calico setters, and fox-terriers, and bull-terriers, and Scotch terriers, and Newfoundlands, and skyes, and bassett-hounds, and mastiffs, and every kind and variety of dog, down to the plain yellow, or common dog dog. There is not a pedigree among the whole lot of them; few have any beauty, and the usefulness of the best of them is a doubtful quantity. True, they bark at night, but they bark as sensationally at the squirrel in the tree as they do at the lurking burglar; and they might bark their heads off before any of us got up to bother with them. They certainly do accompany the baby-carriages on their rounds, with an air of proud, protecting importance, which nothing in the world ever attains to, except an officer in a militia regiment; and there is a widespread belief that if a tramp attempted to raid a baby carriage, the largest of the attendant dogs would eat him up. This must, however, be always a problem of the future, for tramps who are collecting babies are scarce in these parts.

Perhaps they are not valuable or beautiful or useful—our dogs—but we keep the most of them for plain, honest love of them. They play gently with the children; they submit to awkward, childish caresses that hurt them; even the

great, big, short-haired St. Bernard puts his policeman's-club of a tail between his legs and shrinks meekly away when the baby prods him with a sharp stick. When, having been away, we come home, they are the first to meet us, wagging their honest tails, reaching us far ahead of the children, and yet patiently waiting for their meagre word and caress of recognition until the young ones have been fully greeted.

How could we spare them—our dogs—for are they not part and parcel of the suburban household? When the Master of the House comes home at evening, and looking up the roadway from afar off, sees the big yellow tail and the little brown tail wagging cheerfully as he heaves in sight, he knows that all has gone well with the home company, and that he need not fear that change or sickness has come to pass in his absence; for, had it been otherwise, the dogs would have known it, with their wonderful and mysterious dog knowledge, and they would have hid themselves from his sight at the time of his home-coming, instead of going out into the road to wag their honest mongrel tails, and tell him that all was well with those he loved.

THE NEWCOMERS

THE other evening my wife reminded me that I had promised to lend a road map to a man who had recently moved into town from New York. This surprised me somewhat, for I did not remember that I had ever made such a promise. But when I found out that my wife had promised for me, I realized that it was a much more binding engagement than any I could have made, because it was one that I should not be allowed to forget. So I laid down my pipe and book, found the road-map, and strolled out into the night alone; for Mrs. Newcomer had not yet returned Mrs. Sage's call, and my visit was to have no standing in social law—to be a thing existent, but unrecognized, like a drink between drinks, or a Philadelphia alley.

In a spirit of informality, I put on my oldest slouch hat and walked leisurely and luxuriously through the mellow August evening. I say "luxuriously" advisably; for I had not walked a hundred yards before I realized that I was enjoying one of the best luxuries that our generous but somewhat confused climate has to give us. The stars made a faint light in the brooding skies; and the darkened earth was

peaceful and silent with a temperate air, neither hot nor cool; and a pleasant green smell to it.

Ahead of me the gray macadam road stretched dimly on till it lost itself in a vista of arching trees. I was surprised that I seemed to have it all to myself. Perhaps it was too early in the evening, and my fellow-townsmen preferred the charms of nicotine to those of nature. I smiled a smile of kindly contempt for their preference, as I lit a cigar, which I happened to find in my pocket.

I soon perceived, however, that the night was not attractive to me alone. Away off in the distant woods, I heard the performance of a nocturnal tragi-comedy, familiar enough at this season of the year. It had only three acts, or rather, three sounds. The Owl said:

“Whoo-oo!” the gun said “Pop!”; and then the boy with the gun made an unspellable noise that expressed surprise and delight—for he had hit the owl.

This little episode brought out another evidence of human companionship. Away up the road the pale macadam suddenly turned white where a small but brilliant disk of light was projected upon it. Then the light dashed around and lit up the tree-trunks and the underbrush. Then, after an interval, in which I could not hear a sound, except the insect noises of the night, it appeared on the other side of the road, and apparently nearer to me. I stood stock-still and watched the peculiar antics of the light. It

went backward and forward in an uncertain sort of way, not as if its bearer were looking for anything, but more as if he were trying to find his way out of a thicket or a marsh. But there were no thickets or marshes on the broad level road, and even the underbrush in the vacant lots was sparse and low. Besides, the light was sometimes full on, sometimes shut off to a tiny crescent, and sometimes hidden altogether. Moreover, the night was so clear that if it had not been for the blackness that enshrouded whatever was in back of the glare, I should have been able to see the figure of the lantern.

I quickened my pace; but at the first sound of my feet on the hard road the light began to dance backward and forward like a will-o'-the-wisp in a fit; and when I got to the corner of the road that turned down to the Newcomers' house and shouted "hello!" after it, it took itself out of sight up the road, with such speed that I had no temptation to follow it.

When I came in front of the Newcomers' house I stopped in astonishment, and mechanically pulled my watch from my pocket and lit a match to see the time. It was fifteen minutes past eight, but not one light peeped from the closed shutters of the comfortable old-fashioned cottage. A hundred yards on either side lights glowed in the neighbors' windows; but not so much as a glimmer of a night-lamp in a bed-room broke the blackness of the Newcomers' house.

I knew they were all at home, for Mrs. New-

comer had told my wife they would be; so, after some hesitation, I concluded to try a ring at the bell. I think I found the idea that they might be asleep somewhat galling to my spirit. It was showing too frank and unaffected a contempt for the charms of suburban life, and I resented it. I pushed the button in the door-post, and heard a response from the distant kitchen, too loud and clear to escape the notice of any waking person. Then I heard a scratching sound above my head, and, stepping back off the porch, I saw the blinds of a front window pushed out about an inch and a half; and by the faint light that appeared at the chink I judged that some one was holding a candle far back in the bed-room hall. Then a woman's voice, husky and tremulous, but still to be recognized as Mrs. Newcomers', whispered with intense agitation:

"Oh! what is it?—Who is it?—Please go away!—We don't want anything!—I'll wake my husband!—Mr. Newcomer will see you in the morning!—We've all gone to bed!—Oh, dear!"

This exclamation was caused by the action of a gust of wind which blew one leaf of the blind out of the lady's hand and revealed that Mrs. Newcomer was anything but accurate in her statements, for she wore a very pretty and rather elaborate dress, and, as the blind swung back, a piece of fancy work fell at my feet.

I established my identity and stated my errand, and was welcomed with an effusiveness such as no stranger had ever greeted me with before.

The maid in the hallway, devoutly thanking the saints, as if my coming had saved the house from an attack of Apache Indians, produced a lamp, and the two females descended the stairs and were joined in the hallway by some more of the domestic staff. The process of letting me in was a long one. Bolt after bolt was withdrawn, key after key was turned. I knew the old house in its former tenant's time, and remembered that an iron lock with a brass key was its only equipment. The mighty armament was evidently new; but at last the door was pulled open, or, rather, pulled and pushed, for it stuck so tight in the frame that I had to put my shoulder to it before it would yield. As it went back a gust of chokingly warm air rushed out into my face; and it did not take me long to discover that every window in the house, from cellar to garret, was shut tight, although several large lamps were going at full blaze in the kitchen and library, where blankets had been hung up at the windows to keep the light in.

Mrs. Newcomer, with beads of perspiration standing on her forehead, cordially invited me in, but I told her I had not come to stay, and had only meant to leave my map at the door, as I had another pressing engagement. This, however, she would not hear of; and she so earnestly begged me to remain, at least, until Mr. Newcomer returned from the Doctor's, that I had to consent. Fortunately, in my utter astonishment, I had forgot to dispose of my cigar, and Mrs.

Newcomer, observing this, suggested that I should smoke on the porch while she sat near the doorway. She admitted that it was rather close in the house, but said of course she didn't dare to have anything open when Mr. Newcomer was not within doors. So I sat outside and smoked, my hostess sat within the door and talked, and from the servants in the kitchen I could hear fervent ascriptions of thankfulness for the presence of the "good jontlemin."

"I feel quite ashamed of myself for making you stay with me, Mr. Sage," began the lady; "but I know you wouldn't mind—if you knew how nervous we all are—over these dreadful nights in the country. I suppose you've got used to them—you must have, because you've lived here so long,—but I should think it must have required a great deal of courage. And how you get around at night, I don't see. Why, you haven't even got a cane, Mr. Sage! Last night we counted five electric lights that were out, and to-night they've only just lit them up; and poor Mr. Newcomer has to go to the doctor's in all this dreadful darkness! We couldn't remember whether the baby had to have his pills first and the powders afterward, or the other way. And Henry—that is, Mr. Newcomer, is so *very* near-sighted that he's just as likely to run into a tramp as not—and, anyway, they tell me that the night air is full of malaria germs, and that you never should sleep with your windows open. You don't think anything could have happened to Henry,

that he knew everything about that bell, except how to stop it. Meanwhile the bell continued to perform its functions. Newcomer asked me if I knew anything about electricity. I was glad and proud to say that nobody in the world knew so little about electricity as I did. I went home, leaving Newcomer doing something in a vague way with a screw-driver. I strolled slowly home and sat on my porch. An hour or so later, my wife asked me what that faint tinkling was that she had heard for so long. I told her, and she seemed mildly amused.

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But the next day she lured me down to a dis-used tool-house, at the end of the garden, where lay an accumulation of old junk, with the rust of many years upon it. There was not much left of it, and I had quite forgotten all about it, but I could not help recognizing some coils of insulated wire, several gong-bells, two or three patent window fastenings, and a dark-lantern.

THE FIRST OF IT

THE question that his old friends of the city oftenest ask of the suburbanite in the course of his first year is this:

“Do you really like it, living out there?”

To this, if he is unwise—it being assumed that he cannot help being a little bit snobbish—he will reply that he despises suburban life; that he only takes to it for the sake of the children, and that it is merely a temporary expedient in the interests of sanitary science. For this little indiscretion he will pay dearly later on, when he buys his house and settles down. But if he is wise he will say Yes—and say it in very large letters, too, and feign an appropriate enthusiasm.

Yet, if you ask me whether there ever was an indurated resident of a metropolitan city who really enjoyed his first year of suburban house-keeping, I should have to tell you that I do not believe it could be truly said of any man of the sort.

How could he enjoy it?—enjoy the new responsibilities—the new problems—a struggle with the furnace that ends only when the struggle with the front lawn begins—the new conditions of butcher and baker-dom, and the strangeness of keeping your water supply in a box in the garret?

No; certainly he does not enjoy these things, although they surely occupy his mind; nor does he enjoy the breaking up of his settled ways of city life—the loss of his pleasant stroll uptown from the office; of his half-hour's smoke at the club; of his careless stroll through art-gallery or auction-room; of his luxurious idle hour before dinner, and of his easy transition to the theatre or the opera afterward. These things are a part of his life, and he misses them; and deep in his heart he believes that he always will miss them to the end of the chapter; but, after all, this is not where the shoe pinches. His new world must have joys of its own, even though it denies him those of the old. And, after all, it is one whose importance he has calculated exactly, and to which he has thoroughly made up his mind. No, no; the pinch is not here. He could readily enough accommodate his old foot to the new shoe if only—his old friends wouldn't step on it.

But, oh! those old friends! How the faces of them have changed! For years he has been familiar with their kindly jests and gibes; and he has never regarded them as anything worse than pleasant tributes to his pleasant individuality, and he laughs as heartily as they do when he is rallied on the peculiarities of his tastes and habits and fancies. Now, however, he is made to understand beyond peradventure that he has put himself out of the pale of that generous communion, and that his claims to delicate consideration are held to be forfeit unless he is willing to

bow himself in the dust and humble himself before the righteous.

At first he is only surprised and puzzled and pained when he finds the jests of his old city companions taking on a tone not in the least suggestive of urban courtesy. It is more in wonder than in anger that he perceives the bitter, resentful undercurrent of the humor that makes only a clumsy pretense to be as genial as of yore. He knows, of course, that he must expect some jokes on his desertion to the ranks of the Hayseeds; but he cannot understand why, for the first time, these jests that come from friendly lip should be edged and pointed to cut and wound; why they should come so strangely close to the verge of the positively offensive; or why they should convey a suggestion of contemptuously indiscreet familiarity. After a while he gets a light on the subject, but it is not a very pleasant light. He gets an idea of the double crime he has unconsciously committed against the little world he has just left. In the first place, he has taken, with deliberation and foresight, a step to which his old comrades know that they all may be forced sooner or later; and they feel toward him as the other passengers would naturally feel toward a man who said: "Oh, well, if nobody really wants first choice of berths, I'll take the extra large lower one in the middle section." In the second place—and this is the real galling, maddening, stinging thing that he has done—he has shown them all, quite

unconsciously and unintentionally, but all the more convincingly, that he doesn't think it worth while to sacrifice to their gods any longer; that he has made his own estimate of the game that they are playing, and that he doesn't think it worth the amount of combustion which it gets out of the candle of human vitality.

And yet they think he might have done it a little longer, just as they are doing it, bravely and uncomplainingly. He might have figured to get the children to the seaside, one after another, and he might have managed for his wife a week or two at Narragansett, and for himself a few days on somebody's yacht. With a small new economy here, and another one there, and a bit of self-sacrifice of this point, and a risk skilfully evaded at that, it ought to have been possible for him to remain at least a few years longer a resident of the city, though one dwelling sixty or eighty feet above its soil, and to enjoy the blessed favor and privilege of inquiring superciliously of the suburbanite:

"What! You live in the country? And do you really like it, living out there?"

After a while a sort of resigned pity succeeds to resentment in the comments which the suburbanite's friends make upon his dark and discreditable life. There even comes a time when they accept presents of flowers and fruit and early vegetables from him with the patronizing kindness and curiosity which we extend to the prisoner who craves ingenious knickknacks in his lonely cell.

Then there comes a time when they begin to ask casual, indifferent questions about the price of lots in his neighborhood; the sort of society he has; what he does to amuse himself; and what it costs to keep a horse in the country. It is unnecessary to say, however, that it never enters the innocent mind of the suburbanite that these questions are anything but a desire to obtain general information, or that they display any intention on the part of his haughty associates to join him in his rural walk in life.

And so the time goes on, the suburbanite settling himself, day by day, more comfortably in the ever-increasing shadow of his own vine and fig tree; but always at the bottom of his heart, just a little bit pitying himself; until—

It so happens that early in June Mrs. Shingleroof takes the children to pay a visit to her family, and Mr. Shingleroof is left a bachelor for a couple of weeks. Mr. Shingleroof is to spend the term of his bachelorhood in a New York hotel. Mrs. Shingleroof has suggested the plan, for her husband may not soon again have such an opportunity of re-visiting the glimpses of the urban moon that shone so brightly on his bachelor vigils; and she does not want to feel that marriage has wholly separated her husband from his old friends.

Shingleroof has just seen his family off at the Grand Central, and is wending his way downtown when he meets Brownstone. He has not seen much of Brownstone within the last three years;

for while Brownstone is a very good fellow he is known as a great wit of the clubs, and at one time he was so confoundedly sarcastic upon a certain subject, that really,—you know—

“Hello, Shingleroof!” is Brownstone’s greeting, “you’re the very man I want to see. I want to ask you some questions about that place you live in, and I want you to make some inquiries there for me. Are you going out there to-night?”

Shingleroof explains, and Brownstone has a brilliant idea. Shingleroof must spend a week with him, and he a week with Shingleroof. The first week is to be a mad revel among the wonders of the town; the second week is to be one of quiet recuperation and exploration in suburban scenes. “We’ll have a rattling high old time,” says Brownstone; “just like the old days, and then we’ll go out to your place and loaf it off. You are in for a holiday, anyway, and I can get my partner to run the office for a few days.”

The rattling good time rattles less than they had expected. Three or four nights of the theatres and music halls make them both more than willing to spend a quiet evening at home—Brownstone’s home—but the evening is so quiet that Shingleroof goes to bed at half-past nine o’clock—but not to sleep, for the roar of the city breaks his slumbers. In the daytime he finds Brownstone’s clubs somewhat too prim and poky. He has lost track of the personalities. He feels out of place, too, among the pale, precise people, he with his ruddy brown face,

and his clothes that are just the same as theirs, only they aren't. One stranger takes him for an African explorer.

On Friday night they see their last show, and go out of town on the midnight train to see a tennis tournament at Shingleroof's Field Club. And, as he walks up the broad, silent road, breathing in the sweet night breeze under the great arching elms, Shingleroof is conscious of a new, strange and glad sensation.

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He is up bright and early the next morning, happy in the sunlight, the whispering trees, the wind blowing through his many windows; happy in the songs of birds; happy even in picking out the voices of individual dogs from among the great and tireless orchestra that barks and yelps and bays all around him. He gets into his flannels and goes downstairs and shakes hands with everybody in the house, like a patriarch in old days coming home from a journey. He hears the homely news of the town—who is sick, and who has got well; how the water isn't roily any more, and what Mr. Dogberry said about the sick terrier. He and his Man (or nearly so) inspect every corner of his small domain, and look his seventeen-year-old horse over as though he were a probable winner of the Suburban. In his trim garden he rejoices in his radishes and is content with his corn.

He strolls out on the highway and receives a cheery greeting from every passer-by; from the easy-going townspeople to the brisk commuters; from the butcher in his snowy-hued wagon, and the doctor in his rusty gig. The boy with the milk stops to inform him that "We waxed de Woodstocks, and I swiped t'ree ball off of dem." The young tennis enthusiasts, coming back from before-breakfast practice, cross the street to tell him of the chances of the game. Before he has been out ten minutes he has been asked to score for a ball match, referee in the tennis final, subscribe to the fund for a new church organ, and buy three tickets to the picnic of the Friendly Sons of Abyssinians. He feels quite at home.

Then he looks up and sees Brownstone standing by him. Brownstone in patent-leather shoes, pearl-gray trousers, black cutaway coat, high-collared shirt, and, for some mysterious reason, in a silk hat. He, too, has been out for a walk, and he has got into the only patch of underbrush within a mile. Clinging green mementos of his trip decorate him from head to foot. He feels that Brownstone is not doing him credit in the eyes of the young tennis players, but he is too happy to be cross, and he inquires if his guest has had a good night.

"Ye-es," replies Brownstone, doubtfully; "that is, those wretched dogs and birds of yours kept me awake a good deal of the night. I say, what will take grass stains out of my

trousers, and is this prickly stuff here what you call poison ivy?"

Brownstone will go to town on Monday morning just to see if his partner is doing all right, and he will tell his host that he will surely be back that evening unless pressing business detains him. Shingleroof knows that pressing business will detain him, but he cares not a cent. He can get along without Brownstone's company, even though his wife and children be absent; he is at home—not at Brownstone's home—at Shingleroof's home.

And that makes all the difference.

THE SPORTING SCHEME

THE train had been flagged at a little station in New Jersey, and I looked out the window to see if any passengers were likely to come aboard, for I was getting lonely in the great empty smoking-car. It was a gloomy day, too dark to read with comfort, and a fine, drizzling rain was beginning to fall.

The sight of the company on the platform at once awakened my interest. They had just crossed over from a little real estate office which stood across the way from the station, and they formed a curious and striking collection of individuals. One was a sour, saturnine, middle-aged man, who carried a dinner-pail. He was shaking his head obdurately in negative answer to what were evidently persistent pleadings on the part of another man, a small, spry person, cheaply clothed, who looked as if he might be a sewing-machine agent or the "advance" of a circus. The other six men were startlingly different in appearance from the other two talkers. They were all large, burly men, with rosy cheeks, close-cropped hair, a well-groomed appearance generally, and clothes that were at once expensive, English and loud. Two wore riding-breeches, one under a great white box-coat, the

other with a covert-coat. Another was in the "pink" of an English fox-hunter; and the fourth wore a tweed suit with checkerboard stockings, baggy knee-breeches, and a cap. This man carried a golf stick. The other two men, although they belonged to the same general type, wore coachmen's liveries. Each of the six carried a heavy black rubber overcoat on his arm. The big men accompanied the two others in silence.

My window was open, and I could hear the conversation as they approached.

"You won't do it, then?" the little man was saying; "not even if I find the horses? Well, all right; just as you say; but I tell you, man, you are losing the chance of your life!"

The man with the tin-pail shook his head and went away, and the little man suddenly turned upon his companions, full of the rage of disappointment.

"Climb on there, you tarriers!" he said, addressing the elegant group with every manifestation of disrespect. "It's your fool mugs that hoodoo the business. Get aboard, you damn micks! You ain't worth your feed!"

And he drove them before him into the smoking-car.

"Get up there, you potato-peelers!" he said. "Get up to the further end of the car. I won't sit with you. I am sick of you. And put on your coats, you yahoos. I don't care if it is hot; I ain't going to let you spoil those clothes."

He had sunk down into a seat across the aisle before he perceived me and caught my wondering eye. At once he crossed over.

"Sounds kinder queer, doesn't it?" he said. "Well, just be so good as not to give it away, and I'll explain."

He produced a business card and handed it to me. It read:

I. LEGGET,

SPORT BOOMER,

Refers to every Real Estate Dealer in New Jersey.

"Don't catch on?" he inquired. "Well, it's a pretty original scheme of my own. It didn't work at that place, and I was a fool to bother with a real estate agent who would carry his dinner in a can. But, you see, that's a religious community. All towns in New Jersey may be divided into two classes—religious and sporting. Now, my business is booming sport towns. Want to see how I do it? Well, you wait until I get two stations further on, where I drop this gang to relieve another one. It's a junction, that station is, and we'll be just in time for a train from New York on the other branch. You'll see my boys work a train, and you'll see how my

scheme can build up a community. Here, I've got to give them some orders!"

Going up to the other end of the car, he talked earnestly for a long time to the six big men, who listened with awe on their faces. I caught his closing words:

"Now, behave yourselves for once, you chumps, and show the gentleman how the trick's done, and you shall have a can of beer when you get paid off."

"Yis, sorr," said the man in the covert coat; "we will, sorr; thank you kindly, sorr."

The little man came back to me just as the second station hove in sight. This was a very different place from the desolate domain of the agent with the tin-can. Through the trees in every direction I could see the light wood of unfinished houses. New paint shone on a score of commodious villas. There was also a real estate office near the station, but it was a neat and attractive structure, and a portly, well-fed gentleman stood in the doorway.

"Drill, ye tarriers!" shouted the little man to the big ones. "Hustle over to the other platform. There's Mickey's gang over there. Tell Mickey to drill them with you till the New York train is gone. They'll have plenty of time left to get aboard here."

As the men hurried across the platform they were met by another group similar in appearance, several of whom led horses. One had a horse of some blood drawing a dog-cart. One

of the footmen immediately took his station at the head of this animal, while the other received from the agent a dressing-suit case and a leather gun-case, which he held, one in each hand, standing erectly in the station door. Four of the magnificent gentlemen then mounted the horses, with considerable difficulty—in fact, they had to be boosted up by their companions. The others assumed much easier attitudes upon their own feet. One or two lit cigars. The man in the checkerboard smoked a brierwood pipe. The agent distributed hunting-crops among them, and a small boy came out with a case of gleeks and teeing irons and putters, and the rest of them, and stood behind the checkerboards exactly like a Scotch or English caddie. All maintained absolute silence.

It was on this ravishing spectacle of sport and fashion that the New York train drew up. Out came a group of seekers of suburban homes. They were probably mostly city people; but when they saw that display of sporting style they stared about them like a lot of hayseeds on Broadway. Before we started I saw the whole group safely herded into the real estate office. Then the little man brought his second shift of men back into the car.

“There!” said he; “that catches them every time. There weren’t ten houses in that town six months ago. I did it—every bit of it.”

“But don’t they discover the imposition after a while?” I inquired. “Surely your new set-

tlers must some time find out that these decoy-ducks of yours don't live in the town."

"There is no imposition, my dear sir!" rejoined the little man, less warmly. "The people who are attracted by that sort of thing are every bit as bad fake-sports as my bog-trotters here. These poor fellows of mine are honest laboring men out of employment. They do this thing for their board and lodging—you see I feed them well—and they're a good deal better men than most of the dudes who think they can't live without white boxcoats and balloon riding-breeches.

"Of course," he resumed, after a moment of reflection, "it don't do to work a town too long. There *have* been revulsions of feeling, and my tarriers *have* had the hose played on them. But, you see, it's the regular secret society business. The people who are caught want to catch others. I've known them to go out in their own sport clothes and drill with my boys when the express trains came in. Oh, man, you don't understand the real estate business!"

Mr. Legget sank into a deep reverie on the greatness of his scheme, from which he awoke with a sudden start.

"Here," said he, "I'm forgetting myself. I've got to inspect these men before I go to Jersey City. I have got to have them out on two more of these infernal criss-cross New Jersey railroads before dark. Here, you flannel-mouths, stand up in the aisle and be inspected. Larry

Dooley, you wear your pants too hard. If you ain't more careful of them I'll lay you off for a week. Maloney, your red-flannel shirt is showing over your shirt-collar. Corrigan, I saw you at the station without gloves. I've a mind to stop your supper for that. Do you think those red mud-scoops of yours look like Tuxedo or the Meadowbrook Hunt? McCarty, if you strike any more matches on yourself you'll hear from me. Owney Muldoon, my friend, the next time you hold on to a horse's ears to keep yourself steady, you'll get the sack. Now, hustle over to the Greenwood Lake branch, every mother's son of you, and take the tobacco out of your mouths before you get into the train."

"Say," said Mr. Legget to me, turning back after we had parted; "you don't know any lady-like young women in reduced circumstances, do you, who'd do the tailor-made girl for me? I'd pay them well, and they'd beat the Micks out of sight."

I said "No!" and he chased his four sporting swells and their footmen into another smoking-car.

THE EVOLUTION OF THE SUBURBANITE

A DRAMATIC SKETCH IN FIVE TABLEAUX

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

- MR. SUBURBANITE... *A married New Yorker of moderate means, lately settled in Commutahville, N. J.*
- MR. CITT..... *His friend, an unmarried New Yorker of moderate means.*
- MR. NEXT..... *Friend of Mr. Citt. Also an unmarried New Yorker of moderate means.*

TIME: *The Present*

TABLEAU I. *SCENE: A Pleasant Suburban Road. Neat Cottage in foreground, with front lawn. View of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, escorting Mr. CITT to the Sunday afternoon train. The latter carries a hand-bag. He has been spending the day at Commutahville.*

MR. CITT (*with an expression of kindly superiority, gazing carelessly and superciliously about him*).—Nice sort of little place you have here, Subby. I suppose you'll get to like it pretty well, too, after a while. Let's see, you used to say that you rather liked country life, didn't you? Seems kind of funny to see *you* in a place like this, though. I should think you'd find it slow a good deal of the time. *I* should, I know. However, as you say, the children—you know best, of course, what suits you—but I should think—Oh! is that the train? (*Shaking hands warmly and hurriedly.*) Well, good-by; I've had a charming day! Tell Mrs. Suburbanite how much I've enjoyed it! So long!

(*Exit, running.*)

TABLEAU II. SCENE: *Same Pleasant Suburban Road. Same neat Cottage in foreground, with same front lawn. Same view of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, accompanying MR. CITT to the Monday morning train. MR. CITT still carries a hand-bag, but his demeanor is less proud and more genial. He is thinking of a girl he knows in town, and wishing that MRS. SUBURBANITE knew her, and would ask her out.*

MR. CITT (*gazing about him, approvingly*).— Really, you are very nicely settled here, Subby, old man. Seems to have done you good, too. Gad! I never knew you were such a walker. Say, these macadam roads must be elegant for tandem bicycles, mustn't they? I s'pose you really like it out here, don't you? Of course you do, or you wouldn't stay. Well, if you *do* want to live in the country, I suppose you couldn't have chosen a better place, in its way. That little view down there (*pointing*), that's really very pretty a morning like this, don't you know. Spring makes everything look pretty, though, I suppose.

(*Exeunt, strolling, to catch the train by one-eighth-of-a-second.*)

TABLEAU III. *SCENE: Just the same Pleasant Suburban Road. Just the same neat Cottage in foreground, with just the same front lawn. Just the same view of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, accompanying MR. CITT to the Wednesday morning train. MR. CITT carries no hand-bag. He has got to the point of leaving his things at the house, and running out when he feels like it. He is engaged*

to the girl in New York; and he looks around him with balmy ecstasy bubbling in his heart and beaming out of his eyes.

MR. CITT.—No, old man; I'm sorry, but I shan't be out again to-night. Nellie will be at Narragansett at the end of the week, and I must hurry up and get some work done if I want to get off and see her. If it wasn't for that, I'd love to stay. Really, I don't believe you fellows who live out here all the time quite appreciate what a good time you have. Why, I met Lugsby in town the other day, and he was perfectly enthusiastic over his visit here. Said he hadn't enjoyed himself so much in—he didn't know when. Oh! there's no doubt about it, you've got a most delightful, rational way of life. Of course Nellie and I wouldn't care to live anywhere except in New York; but I suppose there's no doubt about it, you fellows out here in the country get more in return for your money than we do in the city. Now what, for instance, did you say that little gray house over there on the hill rented for? Oh, yes; five hundred dollars. Cheap, isn't it, for such a location? And then that view! Why, Lugsby—you know how undemonstrative he is?—he was quite enthusiastic over that view. He said there was something Swiss about it.

(Exeunt MR. CITT, talking steadily.)

TABLEAU IV. *SCENE: Same identical Suburban Road. Same identical neat Cottage in foreground, with same identical front lawn. Same identical view of hills, etc., in distance.*

MR. SUBURBANITE *discovered, escorting MR. CITT to last Sunday afternoon train. MR. CITT's bearing is no longer either proud or exultant; but humble, grateful and anxious. He is married and is the father of one child, aged at the present moment 21 days, 4 hours and 56 minutes. He wears an ulster, and he grasps his friend's hand with effusive warmth at parting.*

MR. CITT.—Well, good-by, old man. You've been awfully kind to take so much trouble. I feel as if I'd been confoundedly selfish, don't you know, taking up your Sunday in dragging you all over those cold houses; but, really, I shouldn't know what to do if it wasn't for your advice. No; I positively can't stay to dinner—Mrs. Suburbanite is just as good as she can be—but I must get back to the flat. The doctor says Nellie can sit up to dinner to-day, if she's had a good day, and I know the poor child has simply set her heart on it. Your wife understands, I am sure. I can't tell you how relieved I shall be when I get Nellie and the baby out here in the fresh air and quiet! She can't help getting back her strength here; don't you think so? And she'll enjoy it so! And that view!

Think of having that view to look at instead of that miserable dark city street! Why, every time I see that view, it reminds me of Switzerland! And you'll tell the agent that I'll take the Dusenberry cottage—the gray one, I mean, not the other—you know. Good-by, again, and thank you ever so much. Nellie will be simply delighted when I tell her.

(Exit, computing interest.)

TABLEAU V. *SCENE: Same Pleasant Suburban Road. TWO Neat Cottages in foreground, with TWO front lawns. Same view of same hills, etc., in same distance.*

MR. CITT *discovered, escorting MR. NEXT to the Sunday afternoon train. The latter carries a hand-bag. He has been spending the day in Commutahville with his old friend and former bachelor companion, MR. CITT, late of New York. With an expression of kindly superiority he gazes carelessly and superciliously about him.*

MR. CITT *(with feverish enthusiasm).*—Pretty nice now, isn't it? I don't believe there's another place like this within twenty—no, sir, within forty miles of New York. I'll tell you what it is, Next, my boy, what you want to do is to marry a nice girl, and come out here and settle down with us. It's the only real way to

enjoy life. Now, there's that house I had before I built my present one—the Dusenberry cottage up there on the hill—put a few hundred, or maybe a thousand dollars' worth of repairs into that—to the plumbing and that sort of thing—and it will make a cottage fit for a king. And that view!—man alive, look at that view! Could you imagine you were within one hour of New York? Why, man, it's Switzerland, that's what it is! It's Switzerland!

(Exeunt. The train booms in the distance.)

SO SPINS—TO END IT WITH A RHYME—
THAT VENGEFUL WHIRLING OF TIME!





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